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COBBETT'S
LEGACY
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COBBETT'S LEGACY TO PARSONS.

COBBETT'S LEGACY TO PARSONS;

OR

HAVE THE CLERGY OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH AN
EQUITABLE RIGHT TO THE TITHES, OR TO ANY OTHER
THING CALLED CHURCH PROPERTY, GREATER THAN
THE DISSENTERS HAVE TO THE SAME? AND
OUGHT THERE, OR OUGHT THERE NOT
TO BE A SEPARATION OF THE
CHURCH FROM THE STATE?

I N S I X L E T T E R S,

Addressed to the Church Parsons in general, including the
Cathedral and College Clergy, and the Bishops.

WITH A

DEDICATION TO BLOMFIELD, BISHOP OF LONDON.

BY

WILLIAM COBBETT, M.P.

FOR OLDHAM.

NEW EDITION.

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CONTENTS.

THE LETTERS.

	PAGE
I.—How came there to be an Established Church ?	9
II.—How came there to be people called Dissenters ?	38
III.—What is the foundation of the domination of the Church over Dissenters ?	50
IV.—Does the Establishment conduce to religious in- struction ?	69
V.—What is the state of the Establishment ? and, is it possible to reform it ?	80
VI.—What is that compound thing, called Church and State ? and what would be the Effect of a separation of them ?	107

DEDICATION.

TO JAMES BLOMFIELD, BISHOP OF LONDON.

Normandy Farm, 9 March, 1835.

Bishop,

About six-and-twenty years ago, you drank tea at my house at BOTLEY, when you were a curate of some place in NORFOLK; or a teacher to the offspring of some hereditary legislator. How rugged has my course been since that time: how thickly has my path been strewed with thorns! How smooth, how flowery, how pleasant, your career! Yet, here we are; you with a mitre on your head, indeed, and a crosier in your holy hands; I, at the end of my rugged and thorny path in a situation to have a right, in the name of the millions of this nation, to inquire, not only into your conduct, but into the utility of the very office that you fill.

It is now become a question, seriously, publicly, and practically entertained, whether you and your brethren of the Established Church should be legally deprived of all your enormous temporal possessions; and also, whether your whole order should not, as a thing supported by the law, be put an end to for ever. These questions

must now be discussed. They are not to be shuffled off by Commissions of Inquiry, or any other Commissions; the people demand a discussion of these questions, and a decision upon them; the Parliament must discuss them; and, this little book, which I now dedicate to you, is written for the PURPOSE of aiding us all in the discussion; so that we may come at last to a just decision.

I select *you* to dedicate my book to; first because you were a zealous defender of the *Dead-Body Bill*, which consigns the corpses of the most unfortunate of the poor to be cut up by surgeons, instead of being consigned, with double and treble solicitude, to the care of a really Christian clergy, and provided with all the means and circumstances of the most respectful Christian burial.

Another reason is, that you were a *poor law commissioner*; one of the authors of that book, which was slyly laid upon the table of the House of Commons, by the Whigs, in 1833; and one of the authors of that voluminous report and appendix, laid upon the table of the same House last year; on which report and appendix the *coarser-food* bill was passed; and in which report and appendix, you have communicated to the House of Commons the most infamous libels against me by name.

Another reason is, that you are a *Church-reform commissioner*, under the present set of Ministers; and that I find, that, while you were Bishop of Chester, you made a G. B. BLOMFIELD, a prebendary of Chester, and that he now has, in addition to that prebend, two great church livings; namely, the rectory of CAD-

DINGTON, and the rectory of TATTENHALL, each worth, probably, from a thousand to fifteen hundred pounds a year. Now, Bishop, this is a very solid reason for addressing my little book to you ; for, if you can talk of “*Church-reform*,” and about seeking for the *means of providing for the cure of souls*, while this BLOMFIELD has a prebend and two great rectories, it is pretty clear that you want a great deal of *enlightening* on the subject. If you do not, however, many other people do’; and therefore it is, that I write and publish this little book, which is my *Legacy to Parsons*, and which I most earnestly hope will very soon be amongst the most valuable of their remaining temporal possessions.

You will find the little book go to the *very bottom* of the matter ; that it will unveil all the mystery that has hung about this Church for so many years ; that it will leave the people nothing more to ask about the matter ; and put them in a situation to determine reasonably, at once, either to submit to the most crying abuses that ever existed upon the face of the earth ; or to put themselves in motion for the purpose of legally but resolutely, effectually, and for ever, putting an end to this abuse.

W.M. COBBETT

LETTER I.

HOW CAME THERE TO BE AN ESTABLISHED CHURCH ?

Parsons,

This question ought to be clearly answered ; because on it must turn the great practical question now at issue ; namely, *has the Parliament the rightful power to assume, to take possession of, and to dispose of, the tithes and all other property, commonly called Church-property, in whatever manner it may think proper?* You and your partisans contend that it has not this rightful power ; I contend that it has.

As to the justice and the expediency, we shall have to consider these further on : we have first to settle the question of right ; and this question will be settled, at once, when we have seen *how this Church came to be.*

The following facts are undeniable ; namely, that the Roman Catholic religion was the religion of all Christian countries and governments until about the year 1520, when HENRY the Eighth was King of England ; that the Roman Catholics contended that their Church was established by Christ and the Apostles ; that they ordained that there should be one flock, one fold, and one shepherd ; that the church was built on *a rock*, the name of St. PETER being synonymous with that of stone, or rock ; that St. PETER was appointed by this Divine authority, to be the first head of the Church, after Christ himself ; that the Popes have

been, and are the true successors of St. PETER, by Divine appointment; that the Pope is the one shepherd, to whom all Christians owe spiritual obedience. The religion was called the *Roman Catholic* religion; because the see (that is to say, seat) of St. PETER was at Rome, and because his authority was *universal*, that being the meaning of the word Catholic.

No matter as to the truth or error of these opinions and assertions: they prevailed; with here and there an exception, all Christians held these opinions; and, when the Christian religion was introduced into England, which was effectually done about six hundred years after the death of Christ, these opinions prevailed in England as well as in other Christian countries. The Pope was the *head of the Church* here as well as elsewhere; his spiritual authority he exercised without any copartnership with, or dependence upon, the state; the tithes and oblations were claimed by him and the clergy as things *belonging to God*, and held by them solely by Divine authority. Whatever was given to the Church by anybody; whatever endowment, of any description; was held to belong to the Church, independent of all temporal or secular power. The church claimed to hold its possessions independent of all written laws; they claimed a *prescriptive* right to all their possessions; they allowed no time to work injury to their rights; in short, they claimed to hold their possessions immediately from God himself, as a man claims the right to the possession of his life and his limbs; and, of course, they denied that any legislator, or any body of legislators, possessed, or could possibly possess, the rightful power to take from them, or to interfere with the management of, any part of those possessions. As I said before, no matter as to the soundness or unsoundness of the doctrines on which these pretensions were founded: such were the doctrines, and such the pretensions; and, during their

prevalence in England, arose our churches, our parishes (or priest-ships), our cathedrals, and bishops' sees ; all those monasteries which have since been suppressed and destroyed ; and, along with the rest, our universities and their colleges.

For a Parliament to meddle with a Church like this; to question the rightful power of a Parliament, consisting of laymen, to meddle with the possessions of a Church like this, having its head totally separate from the temporal sovereignty of the country ; to question the rightful power of a body of laymen to meddle with the property of a Church like this, whose Divine origin, and Divine mission and authority, had been universally acknowledged for about twelve hundred years ; to question the rightful power of a Parliament, in such a case, was not a thing so very unreasonable ; but, on the contrary, the questioners had reason on their side, especially as these doctrines had prevailed during so long a period ; and as the country had been so free, and so happy, during the greater part of that period.

But, Parsons, has *your Church* any such pretensions ? I have a high opinion of that quality in you, which is usually denominated “*brass* ;” but, do you pretend that this Establishment was founded by Jesus Christ and his Apostles ? Do you pretend to hold your possessions immediately by a grant from God ; and that they are as much yours as my life and my limbs are mine ? Why, yes, you are, at this time (very curious to relate), endeavouring to set up a something savouring of these pretensions ; and are positively asserting that you hold your possessions, and to the exclusion too of all other Christian sects, by a right of *prescription* ; that is to say, a right which existed before all written laws. This was distinctly stated by Sir ROBERT PEEL, during the discussion of the question relative to the admission of Dissenters to take degrees in the Universities. Quite

enough had been written and published by me, long before, to show that it was rapine, on the part of those who took the Church-property from Catholics and gave it to Protestants; that that was an act of rapine, and not an act of rightful power, on the part of the Parliament of that day, unless the present Parliament had the rightful power to take the property from the present possessors and dispose of it at its pleasure. Perceiving the irresistible force of this argument, Sir ROBERT PEEL, forgetting all about the lay-impropriations, discovered that the *Catholic Church had a prescriptive right* to its possessions; and that the Parliament had *never meddled with that prescriptive right*; that the Established Church was still, in fact, the *Catholic Church*, and was merely *reformed*; and that it was in the possession of all the prescriptive rights which had ever belonged to "Holy Church!"

If this were so; if you were merely a reformed Catholic Church, and the regular successors of the bishops and priests of the Roman Catholic religion; then all the lay-estates, in tithes or in lands, which were formerly possessed by your predecessors, are wholly destitute of a title; and the owners may, any day, be legally ejected by the King's Attorney-General; and the King may order the estates to be returned to you. However, we are now going to look at the reality; we are now going to see, that, to tithes, to oblations, to bishops' lands, to college lands, to any thing that you possess, as clergy of the Church, you have no prescriptive right, any more than the Duke of WELLINGTON has to his estate of STRATHFIELDSAYE, which he possesses in virtue of an Act of Parliament, and solely in virtue of that Act of Parliament. Indeed, what are the names, style, and title of your Church? Wh. "*The Protestant Church of England, as by law established;*" not as by Christ established; not as established by the Apostles. The King's coronation oath binds him to

support the Protestant Church “as by law established :” and this description was invented too for the express purpose of distinguishing the tenure of your Church from that of the Roman Catholic Church ; the tenure of which was by prescription, independent of all written law. In short, yours is a Church *foundea solely on Acts of the Parliament sitting at Westminster* ; and we are now going to see what those Acts of Parliament were ; under what circumstances they were passed, and the sort of men by whom they were passed ; together with the manifold motives and objects of those men.

The Roman Catholic Church had begun to have its authority disputed in some parts of Christendom, about the year 1520. At this time HENRY the Eighth, for the purpose of gratifying his own wicked passions, joined those who had begun to deny the authority of the Pope as head of the Church, though he had before written a book in defence of that authority for which he had received the title of “*Defender of the Faith*,” which our kings retain to this day, though by their coronation oath they solemnly protest against that very faith of which HENRY the Eighth was the *Defender* ! This monster of cruelty proclaimed himself to be the *supreme head of Christ’s Church* in England ; and he put to death hundreds of most virtuous and excellent persons, because they would not take an oath recognising his spiritual supremacy. Finding his most strenuous opponents to be in the monasteries, and at the same time, eager to get hold of the possessions of those monasteries as the means of bribing over to his side the most powerful men in the country, he suppressed ; that is to say, he confiscated and took possession of all the monasteries and all their immense estates. This was not done without Acts of Parliament. Two Acts were passed : one in the 27th year of his reign, and in the year 1535 ; the other in the 31st year of his

reign, and in the year 1539. These Acts of Parliament granted to him all this great mass of possessions; and granted to him also a very considerable part of the great tithes of the parishes; because the monasteries had in many cases become both the patrons and the incumbents of the benefices of the parishes. Thus, more than a third part of the whole of the real property of the kingdom was granted to him by the Parliament, with power to him to give it away to whom he pleased; to sell it, or to exchange it. Those who passed these Acts knew very well that they should have the chief share of the spoil. He was compelled to divide this spoil amongst the noblemen, gentlemen, and all persons of great power and influence in the country; in order to bind them up in the same girdle with himself. This he did without loss of time, and we are now going to see the prodigious effect of this division of the spoil; and especially we are going to see its great effect in the producing of this present Church of England, "as by law established."

Amidst such assaults as these, it was impossible that the Roman Catholic Church should remain unshaken. When men saw these monstrous acts of what had hitherto been deemed sacrilege, committed, not only with impunity, but under the sanction of law; when they saw a mere layman assume the spiritual supremacy of the Church of CHRIST; when they saw innumerable persons put to death for refusing to swear, that they believed that which they had always been taught to disbelieve; when they heard this new head of the Church proclaiming one sort of creed one day, and another sort of creed another day; when they saw him burning Protestants and Catholics at the same stake; and still heard him call himself a Catholic king, and a spiritual head of the Church at the same time: amidst all these things, it was impossible that men could retain any-

thing like an unity of faith : it was impossible that the nation should not be split up into a diversity of sects, that each man should not claim a right to think and decide for himself in religious matters ; and this actually was the state in England, in this respect, at the time of the death of this merciless tyrant, which took place in the year 1547, when he expired, in the fifty-sixth year of his age, and in the thirty-eighth of his reign ; the most unjust, hard-hearted, meanest, and most sanguinary tyrant that the world had ever beheld, whether Christian or Heathen. As long as this tyrant existed, the holders of confiscated Church property, which was also *the patrimony of the poor* at the same time, were safe in their possessions under his sort of mongrel Catholic Church ; but when his son EDWARD the Sixth (a mere boy), succeeded him, and the government was to be carried on by guardians and trustees, there was great danger that the people would resume their rights ; at any rate, that the Pope would, in a short time, resume his power in England where the parish-priests were still Catholic ; and if he resumed his power, the shares in the plunder were in a perilous state, as far as related to that plunder. Therefore, in order to obviate this danger, it was necessary to abrogate, to put down by Act of Parliament, to efface for ever, if possible, the Catholic religion in ENGLAND. And Parsons, look at the thing well ; for here you will find the first, the great, the all-powerful motive for making the Protestant Church, “as by law established.” If men had been left without any law to compel them to submit to any particular Church, they who had never had an idea of tithes, oblations, or Church-land rents, payable to *mere laymen*, never could have long submitted to such payment. Nothing but the axes and the halters, and the fires of HENRY the Eighth, could have induced them to submit to this. It was, therefore, necessary *to make another Church* ; and to give to

that Church all the powers, all the exclusive benefits, all the protection, all the advantages necessary to make it a valuable thing to those who would necessarily have its patronage exclusively in their hands.

With these motives in their minds, and these objects before them, the nobility, the powerful gentry, to name them by one word, the *aristocracy*, having got rid of the old tyrant, and his mongrel Catholic religion, resolved to make a new Church by law, and a *Protestant Church*, in order that the Pope might never come and instigate the people to make them restore the landed estates and the tithes which they had got into their possession by grants from the barbarous old tyrant. In their execution of this design, this nation witnessed scenes never before witnessed in this world ; such insincerity, such bare-faced apostacy, such greediness, such injustice, such defiance of every sentiment of morality, and every sentiment of religion, such prostration of character as cannot be described by tongue or pen, except in faithfully relating the facts ; and it would be wise in you Parsons, never to direct our eyes back to the origin of this Church, as by law established. The Catholics assert that their Church originated with Christ and his Apostles ; yours originated with the aristocracy of England, whose conduct, in the making of this Church, we have now to survey ; we have now to look at it in its true colours, be the effects on our minds what they may.

The *motives* for making the Church I have described ; and now we have to see something of the manner of making it. The first step was by Act of Parliament, first year of EDWARD the Sixth, chapter i. and in the year 1547. This is an Act to punish people for speaking irreverently against the sacrament, taken in *both kinds*, which was contrary to the practice of the Catholic Church. The preamble of

the Act tells us, that this new practice had been ridiculed by the people, "in dialogues, rhymes, songs, plays, and jests." The sharers of the spoil of the Church and the poor people were by no means disposed to suffer songs and jests upon the subject. They therefore enacted that these rhymsters and singers should suffer "imprisonment of their bodies, and fines, at the king's will and pleasure." Though this was wholly a new thing; quite contrary to the faith and practice of the people and of their fore-fathers for nine hundred years; a new invention oversetting the main pillar of their faith. This monstrous severity was followed by an enactment, giving a new interpretation to the Holy Scriptures, and containing an assertion, laid down by mere laymen, that both the bread and the wine were necessary to be taken. But this was only a little beginning; this was only a foretaste of that which was to come: it was a preparing of the way for the making of this Church, the fate of which is now to be decided.

In the second year of the reign of this boy-king (who was now only *eleven* years old), who was, at once, supreme spiritual head of the Church, and secular sovereign of the State, this Protestant Church and religion were established. The Roman Catholic religion having been abrogated, having been protested against and declared to be idolatrous and damnable, all men were let loose to choose for themselves, each having the Bible in his hands. One sect had as much right to the churches and the tithes as another sect; but this would never have done for the aristocracy. The remaining tithes, the oblations, the bishops' lands, the college lands: these were too valuable to be suffered to be scramb'd for, and though the aristocracy had protested against that Church, to which they had belonged, and for the support of which they had been given, still they had no quarrel with

the things themselves ; they had not protested against the tithes, and the lands, and the oblations ; they had only protested against their being in hands other than their own. The Catholic religion was idolatrous and damnable ; but they saw nothing either idolatrous or damnable, in the lands, the tithes, and the oblations. These, therefore, they resolved to keep ; but to keep them, they must have another Church ; and to that Church all must yield tithes and oblations, however contrary its creeds might be to the faith which the Scriptures taught them to adopt, or which they had been taught by their fathers from generation to generation. The preamble of the Act of Parliament (1st and 2nd EDWARD the Sixth) tells us, that “ the “ king, in his great goodness, has appointed the Arch-“ bishop of Canterbury (CRANMER), and others, to “ draw, and make, one meet order, rite, and fashion, “ of common and open prayer, and administration of “ Sacraments, to be had, and used in his Majesty’s realm “ of ENGLAND and WALES ; the which, at this time, “ by aid of the Holy Ghost, with one uniform agree-“ ment is of them concluded, set forth, and delivered “ to his Highness” (*eleven years of age*) “ to his great “ comfort and quietness of mind, intituled, *The Book* “ *of common Prayer and Administration of the Sacra-
ments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church* “ *after the use of the Church of England*. Wherefore, “ the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in this present Par-“ liament assembled, considering as well the most godly “ travel of the king’s highness” (*eleven years of age*), “ of the Lord Protector, and of other his Highness’s “ council, in gathering and collecting the said Arch-“ bishop, and learned men together, as the godly “ Prayers, Rites and Ceremonies, in the said book “ mentioned ; and the considerations of altering those “ things which he altered, and retaining those things “ which he retained in the said book, but also *the* “ *honour of God* and great quietness, which by the

" grace of God, shall ensue, do give his Higness most
" hearty and lowly thanks for the same."

Bearing in mind this assertion about the *aid of the Holy Ghost*, in this work, let us now come to the enactments. You, Parsons, found the Church's prescriptive rights upon the assertion, *that there never was any Act of Parliament for taking the benefices away from the Catholics and giving them to Protestants*; that the Catholic parish-priests were never ousted from their benefices by Act of Parliament; that they became converted in their several parishes; or continued to exercise their functions as before, till the day of their death; or that they went away from their benefices without force: so that, as they had unquestionably, a prescriptive right to their benefices; the present parsons stand fairly in their shoes, and have a *prescriptive right* too. Now, then, let us see how this matter stands. The king had put forth a Book of Homilies and a Catechism. Priests had been permitted to marry; and an Act was soon after passed (2nd and 3rd EDWARD the Sixth, chap. 21) to allow priests to marry. Every inducement had been offered to withdraw the parish-priests from their religion; but still, with very few scandalous exceptions, they remained firm in their faith and their practice, at the time of the passing of this Act. The Act, therefore, provided, that, if any rector, vicar, perpetual curate, or other priest, with benefice, should in future say mass in the usual manner, and not use the Common Prayer Book, he should forfeit to the king one year's revenue of his benefice, and be imprisoned for six months; that for a second offence, he should be deprived of his benefice, and of all his spiritual promotions, and be imprisoned for one whole year; for a third offence, imprisonment during his natural life; that, if the priest had no benefice, he should be imprisoned for six months for the first offence; and for the second offence, should be imprisoned for his

natural life ! Thus did this gentle Christian Church begin ; thus did the Angel of Charity, Humility, and Humanity, preside at her birth. But the Act did not stop here, it went on to the laity ; and it enacted, that if any one should, by interludes, plays, songs, rhymes, or by other open words, declare or speak anything in derogation, depraving, or despising, the said Book of Common Prayer, penalty after penalty were to follow, till at last came the forfeiture of chattels to the king, and imprisonment during the natural life of the party !

Here we have a faithful account of the BIRTH of this famous Church, which simply put it to the priests and the people : “ *Here is this Church; take it; or, take pecuniary ruin and imprisonment for life;* ” and in the face of these undeniable facts, is there any one base enough to say, that the Catholic priests were not ousted *by force*, and *by Act of Parliament*? The Act provides for the depriving of the party of his benefice, and of all spiritual promotion whatever, unless he apostatize from the Catholic religion ; and it authorizes patrons to appoint Protestant ministers to succeed him, in just the same manner as if he were dead. Will Sir ROBERT PEEL call this “ *a reformed Catholic church,* ” then ? Will he again say, that the Protestant parsons stand in the *prescriptive shoes* of the Catholic priests ?

But, the reader will say, did this Common Prayer Book always continue in use, after this Act was passed ? Oh no ! And now we have to see what sort of men those were who made this new Church, and to see well what their motives were. For very much depends upon this, when we are estimating the character of this Church.

This church-making king died at the end of about seven years, and was succeeded on the throne by his sister Mary, who was a Catholic ; and who, proceeding upon the settled constitution and laws of the

country, resolved upon restoring the Catholic religion. The Common Prayer-Book aristocracy, exceedingly alarmed at this prospect; not so much alarmed, however, for the almost certain loss of the Common Prayer Book and the new Church, as for the possible, and even probable loss of that immense mass of property of the Church and the poor, which they had got into their possession, by the means before mentioned, entered into a negotiation with the queen, *agreeing to give up their Common Prayer Book* and their Protestant religion; agreeing to bring back the Catholic religion into the country, and to punish parsons for not being Catholics, as they had punished them before for not being Protestants; agreeing to confess themselves to have been schismatics; agreeing to receive absolution from the Pope, for having rebelled against his authority; agreeing to reinstate him in all his power in England, which they before designated as abominable usurpations; agreeing, above all things, to abrogate as schismatical that very Common Prayer Book which they had before declared, in the preamble to an Act of Parliament, to have been composed by the “aid of the Holy Ghost,” and which was, they said, made “*to the honour of God*;” agreeing to all this, if the queen would obtain the consent of the Pope, and give her own consent, *to suffer them to keep the immense masses of property in land and in tithes*, which, during the two preceding reigns, they had grasped from the Church and the poor! This is something so monstrous, that I would venture to state it upon no authority short of that of an Act of Parliament; and yet it is by no means the worst that we have to behold on the part of these men who called themselves *noblemen* and *gentlemen*, and whose descendants coolly assume the same appellations!

As a sort of prelude to the monstrous acts, which they were about to perform, they passed almost as

soon as MARY was upon the throne, an Act to *repeal the whole of the famous Act, making the Common Prayer Book*; and that too upon the ground, that it was contrary to the true religion; though they alleged that they had been *assisted by the Holy Ghost*, in the making of that Book of Common Prayer! They abolished all the penalties for persons acting plays, singing songs, ridiculing the new religion; they repealed the law for preventing images being put up in churches; they repealed the law permitting priests to marry; they swept away, by this Act of Parliament, every vestige of the Protestant Church service, and reinstated the service of the Catholic religion; brought in again the singing of the mass in all the churches and chapels: and this too upon the express ground that they had been for years *wandering in error and in schism*; though, never forget, that they asserted that the Holy Ghost had assisted them in making their Common Prayer Book!

This, however, was only a beginning. Having made their bargain to keep the lands and the tithes, which they had taken from the Church and the Poor, they petitioned the Queen to intercede with the Pope to forgive them for all the sins which they had committed against him, and against the Catholic faith; to "assoil, discharge, and deliver them from all ecclesiastical excommunications, interdictions, and censures, hanging over their heads, for their faults during the schism: and to take them again into the bosom of Holy Church." The Queen, detesting the monsters in her heart, no doubt, consented, and obtained the Pope's consent, to let them keep the lands and the tithes; not because it was right, but because it was thought to be an evil less than that of a civil war, which might have been produced by a rejection of the terms of this agreement. Having obtained the security, Cardinal POLE was sent over by the Pope, as his legate, authorized to give them pardon and

absolution. To work they went, instantly, to repeal every act made, after Henry the Eighth began his rebellion against the Pope ; every act at all trenching on the papal authority ; but taking special care in the same Act to secure to themselves the safe possession of all the property of the Church and the Poor, which they had grasped, during the reigns of HENRY and of EDWARD. Though, I say, I am referring to Acts of Parliament, and though the reader will, upon reflection, know that I should not dare to state the substance of those Acts untruly, still I cannot give an adequate idea of the character of these Protestant church-makers, without taking their own words, as I find them in the preamble to this Aet, 1st and 2nd of MARY, chapter 8 ; and when I read it, I always wonder that some scheme or other has not been invented for the obliterating, for the erasing, from the statute-book, words so dishonourable, so indelibly infamous.

“ Whereas since the twentieth year of King HENRY
“ the Eighth of famous memory, Father unto your
“ Majesty our most natural Sovereign, and gracious
“ Lady and Queen, much false and erroneous doctrine
“ hath been taught, preached and written, partly by
“ divers the natural-born subjects of this realm, and
“ partly being brought in hither from sundry other
“ foreign countries, hath been sown and spread abroad
“ within the same : by reason whereof, as well the
“ spirituality as the temporality of your Highness’
“ realms and dominions have swerved from the obe-
“ dience of the See Apostolick, and declined from the
“ unity of Christ’s Church, and so have continued,
“ until such time as your Majesty being first raised
“ up by God, and set in the seat royal over us, and
“ then by his divine and gracious Providence knit in
“ marriage with the most noble and virtuous Prince
“ the King our Sovereign Lord your Husband, the
“ Pope’s Holiness and the See Apostolick sent hither

" unto your Majesties (as unto persons undefiled, and
" by God's goodness preserved from the common
" infection aforesaid) and to the whole realm, the
" most Reverend Father in God the Lord Cardina.
" POLE, Legate *de latere*, to call us home again into
" the right way from whence we have all this long
" while wandered and strayed abroad ; and we, after
" sundry long and grievous plagues and calamities,
" seeing by the goodness of God our own errors, have
" acknowledged the same unto the said most Reverend
" Father, and by him have been and are the rather
" at the contemplation of your Majesties, received and
" embraced unto the Unity and Bosom of Christ's
" Church, and upon our humble submission and pro-
" mise made for a declaration of our repentance, to
" repeal and abrogate such Acts and Statutes as had
" been made in Parliament since the said twentieth
" year of the said King Henry the Eighth, against
" the supremacy of the See Apostolick, as in our sub-
" mission exhibited to the said most Reverend Father
" in God by your Majesties appeareth : the tenour
" whereof ensueth.

" We the Lords spiritual and temporal and the
" Commons, assembled in this present Parliament,
" representing the whole body of the realm of Eng-
" land, and the dominions of the same, in the name
" of ourselves particularly, and also of the said body
" universally, in this our supplication directed to your
" Majesties, with most humble suit, that it may by
" your graces intercession and mean be exhibited to
" the most Reverend Father in God, the Lord Car-
" dinal Pole, Legate, sent specially hither from our
" most Holy Father Pope Julian the Third and the
" See Apostolick of Rome, do declare ourselves very
" sorry and repentant of the schism and disobedience
" committed in this realm and dominions aforesaid
" against the See Apostolick, either by making, agree-
" ing, or executing any Laws, Ordinances or Com-

" mandments, against the supremacy of the said See,
" or otherwise doing or speaking, that might impugn
" the same : offering ourselves and promising by this
" our supplication, that for a token and knowledge of
" our said repentance, we be and shall be always
" ready, under and with the authorities of your Ma-
" jesties, to the uttermost of our powers, to do that
" shall lie in us for the abrogation and repealing of
" the said Laws and Ordinances, in this present
" Parliament, as well for ourselves as for the whole body
" whom we represent. Whereupon we most humbly
" desire your Majesties, as personages undefiled in the
" offence of this body towards the said See, which
" nevertheless God by His Providence hath made subject
" to you, so to set forth this our humble suit that we
" may obtain from the See Apostolick, by the said most
" Reverend Father, as well particularly and generally,
" absolution, release, and discharge from all danger of
" such censures and sentences, as by the Laws of the
" Church we be fallen into ; and that we may as
" children repentant be received into the bosom and
" unity of Christ's Church, so as this noble realm,
" with all the members thereof, may in this unity and
" perfect obedience to the See Apostolick, and Popes
" for the time being, serve God and your Majesties, to
" the furtherance and advancement of His honour
" and glory. We are, at the intercession of your
" Majesties, by the authority of our holy Father Pope
" Julian the Third and of the See Apostolick, assoiled,
" discharged and delivered from the excommunications,
" interdictions, and other censures ecclesiastical, which
" hath hanged over our heads, for our said defaults,
" since the time of the said schism mentioned in our
" supplication. It may now like your Majesties, that
" for the accomplishment of our promise made in the
" said supplication, that is, to repeal all the Laws and
" Statutes made contrary to the said Supremacy and
" See Apostolick, during the said schism, the which is

"to be understood since the twentieth year of the
"reign of the said late King Henry the Eighth, and
"so the said Lord Legate doth accept and recognise
"the same."

After this most solemn recantation ; after this appeal to God for the sincerity of their repentance, they proceeded to enact the repeal of every Act that had ever been passed to infringe upon the supremacy or authority of the Pope ; they, in the most express and solemn manner, enacted that no king or queen of England *was ever, or ever could be* the head of the Church, or had, or ever could have, any pretension to a right of supremacy in regard to the Church. But, in the same Act of Parliament, every sentence of which makes one shudder as one reads it, they took special care, while they acknowledged the act of plunder, to secure to themselves, by clause upon clause, the *uninterrupted possession of that third part of the property of the kingdom, which they had grasped from the Church and the poor.*

But, at any rate, they were now Catholics again ; they were once more Roman Catholics. They had been born and bred Roman Catholics ; they had apostatized and protested against the faith of their fathers, for the purpose of getting possession of a large part of the property of the kingdom ; but having now made safe the possession of this enormous mass of plunder ; and having, nevertheless, been absolved of their sins, and taken back into the bosom of the Church, they, surely, now remained Roman Catholics to the end of their days ? Not they, indeed ; for the moment the death of MARY took place, which was in 1558, that is to say at the end of five years, they undid all that they had done in the time of MARY ; apostatized again, and declared their abhorrence of that Church, into the bosom of which they had so recently thanked the Queen for having interceded with the Pope to receive them !

This would not, and could not, be believed, if it

were not upon record in the Statute Book, which cannot lie, in this case; and which contains in this case, too, the *law as we have now to obey it*. ELIZABETH the immediate successor of MARY, was a Catholic herself, by profession and public worship; she was crowned by a Catholic bishop; her manifest intention, at first, was to maintain the Catholic religion: but she was *a bastard*, according to the law, she having been born of another woman, while her father's first wife was still alive; besides which, an Act had been passed in her father's life-time declaring her to be a bastard. All this would not have signified much; but the Pope would not recognise her legitimacy; and of course would not acknowledge her right to reign as Queen of ENGLAND. Finding this, she resolved to be Protestant; and resolved that her people should be Protestant, too. The very first Act of Parliament of her reign, therefore, swept away the whole that had been done during the reign of MARY; and the Act (1st of ELIZABETH, chapter 1) repealed the whole of the Act of which I have just quoted the memorable preamble, except only those parts of it which secured the plunder of the Church and the poor to those who had got possession of it; and those same men, who had so recently received absolution from the Pope, for having acknowledged the ecclesiastical supremacy to be in the king, now enacted, that that supremacy had always belonged to the king; that it never had belonged to the Pope; that the Pope had usurped it; and they even went so far now as to exact an *oath* from every Englishman, if the Queen chose to require it, declaring a firm belief in this supremacy of the Queen! The oath (in use to this day) begins thus, "I, A. B., do utterly declare and "testify in my conscience, that the Queen's Highness "is the only supreme governor of this realm, as well "in all spiritual and ecclesiastical things, or causes, "as temporal!" An oath was now to come to re-assert that, which these very men had supplicated pardon and

absolution from the Pope, and prayed for forgiveness to God, for having asserted before.

But the second Act (1st ELIZABETH, chapter 2) brought back the *Prayer Book again*. The horrible men, whose conduct we have been reviewing, had condemned their Prayer Book as schismatical ; had abolished it by their Acts ; and had reinstated Catholic priests in the churches. They now, in the Act of which I am speaking, ousted them again ; re-enacted the Common Prayer Book ; and inflicted penalties upon the priests who should refuse to apostatize by becoming Protestants and using this book in their churches. For the first offence, such priest was to forfeit a year's revenue of his benefice, and be imprisoned for six months. For a second offence he was to lose all his ecclesiastical preferments and possessions, and was, besides, to be imprisoned during the remainder of his life. If he were a priest without a benefice, he was to be imprisoned, for the first offence, during a whole year ; for the second offence imprisoned during his whole life. For speaking in derogation of the Prayer Book ; or to ridicule the new religion, by songs, plays, jests, of any sort, the offender was to forfeit a hundred marks for the first offence ; four hundred marks for the second offence (equal to two thousand pounds of the money of this day) ; and for the third offence, to forfeit to the Queen all his goods and chattels, and be imprisoned for life. Every person was compelled on Sundays, and holydays, to attend at the Church, to hear this common prayer, under various pecuniary penalties, and in failure of paying the penalties, to be imprisoned. Bishops, Archdeacons, and other ordinaries, were to have power for inflicting these punishments. This Act of confiscation, of ruin, of stripes, of death, was enforced with all the rigour that imagination can conceive. The Queen reigned for forty-five years, and these forty-five years were spent in deeds of such cruelty, as the world had never heard of or read of before ; and all for the

purpose of compelling her people to submit to this established Church. With regard to the cruelties of this monster in woman's shape; her butcherings; her rippings-up; her tearing-out of the bowels of her subjects; her racks; her torments, of every description, in which she was always cordially supported by the law-giving makers of the Prayer-Book, I must refer the reader to my "*History of the Protestant Reformation:*" suffice it to say, that, in these forty-five years which were employed in the establishing of this Church, there were more cruelty, more bloodshed, more suffering, than ever were witnessed in the world, in any other country, in a like period of time.

The main thing, however, to be kept in view here, is the fact, which all these Acts of Parliament so fully confirm, that this Church was created by Acts of Parliament; that it has no existence as a church; that it has no rite, no ceremony, no creed, no article of faith, which has not sprung out of an Act of the Parliament; and that there is nothing of prescription belonging to it, from its first being named amongst men, until the present hour.

It is not, by any means, when we are examining into the origin, and the pretended *unalienable* rights of this Church; it is not, by any means, unnecessary to look well at the conduct and character of those Parliaments, who passed the several Acts by which the Church was made. It was manifestly not made by Christ and his Apostles. It is certain it was made by Acts of Parliament; but if those who composed those Parliaments had been men resembling the fathers of the Church; if they had been men of acknowledged piety and disinterestedness, their character would have thrown a sort of lustre over the thing that they had made; but when we find them begin by an act of plunder, so great as to be almost incredible; when we see them remain Catholics till this plunder became in danger by the existence of that religion; when we see them turn

Protestants, and make the Church and its Prayer-book, and ascribe the success of the undertaking to the aid given them by the Holy Ghost; when we afterwards see them abolishing this Prayer-book, declaring it to have been schismatical, supplicating a Catholic Queen to interfere with the Pope for pardon for having made it; when we see them actually receiving absolution from the Pope's legate for having made this book, the making of which they had ascribed to the aid of the Holy Ghost; when we see them afterwards re-cant and re-apostatize; when we see them re-enact the Common Prayer-book, re-enforce it upon the people; and, especially, when we see this remarkable circumstance; that, when they had to suffer the Catholic religion to take its course; when the object of their enactments was to restore *that* religion, they *had no penalties to inflict*; no compulsion to exercise; no fines to impose, in order to drag the people to the Church; but that, when they had their Prayer-book Church to establish; then they had fines, forfeitures, imprisonment for life, to inflict; and everything short of immediate death, in order to secure anything like compliance on the part of the people.

Thus was this Church established, not, as her defenders pretend, by the reasonableness of the institution itself; not by its own "*inherent beauty and simplicity*," as the fat and impudent pluralist tells us; not by the pretended "*reform of abuses*" which its institution effected; but solely by Acts of Parliament, of the most severe and cruel character; and executed with the most savage barbarity. The authors of these acts were triple apostates; by far the most shameless apostates, the most barefaced, the most unblushing, that the world has ever seen. The origin of this Church, then, is not to be found in mere Acts of Parliament, but in Acts of Parliament causing sheer force, bodily coercion, pains and penalties, at every step, to be used; this is the main thing to be kept in view, when the end of

our enquiry is to be, whether it be not now proper to take from this Church the protection of the State.

These are the Acts of Parliament to be attended to in a particular manner; first, 2nd and 3rd Edward the Sixth, chapter 1; second, 1st of ELIZABETH, chapter 2; third, 13th of ELIZABETH, chapter 12. The first relates to the making of the Common Prayer Book, by Cranmer and his associates; and here we must stop a moment to enquire a little what this Cranmer was. We know that he was Archbishop of Canterbury at the time when he made this Prayer-Book. The whole of the history of this man; of all his horrid deeds, and those of his associates, is to be found in my "*History of the Protestant Reformation*"; but as we are now speaking of that famous Church of which he was the founder, and of that Prayer-Book, of which he was the principal author, I must give, respecting him, an extract from that book; for without knowing *who* and *what* he was, we shall not have all the merits of this Church fairly before us. "Black as many others are, they bleach the "moment that CRANMER appears in his true colours. "But, alas! where is the pen or tongue to give us "those colours? Of the sixty-five years that he lived, "and of the thirty-five years of his manhood, twenty- "nine years were spent in the commission of a series "of acts, which, for wickedness in their nature, and "for mischief in their consequences, are absolutely "without anything approaching to a parallel in the an- "nals of human infamy. Being a *fellow* of a college at "CAMBRIDGE, and having, of course, made an engage- "ment (as the *fellow*s do to this day) not to marry "while he was a fellow, he married *secretly*, and still "enjoyed his fellowship. While a married man he "became a priest, and took the *oath of celibacy*; and, "going to Germany, he *married another wife*, the "daughter of a Protestant; so that now he had two "wives at the one time, though his *oath* bound him to "have no wife at all. He, as Archbishop, enforced

"the law of celibacy, while he himself secretly kept
"his German *frow* in the palace at Canterbury, having,
"as we have seen in paragraph 104, imported her
"in a chest. He, as ecclesiastical judge, divorced
"HENRY VIII. from *three wives*, the grounds of his
"decision in two of the cases being directly the con-
"trary of those which he himself had laid down when
"he *declared the marriage to be valid*; and, in the case
"of ANNE BOLEYN, he, as ecclesiastical judge, pro-
"nounced that ANNE had *never been the king's wife*;
"while, as a member of the House of Peers, he *voted*
"for her *death*, as having been an *adulteress*, and
"thereby guilty of *treason* to her *husband*. As
"Archbishop under HENRY, (which office he entered
"upon with a premeditated false oath on his lips), he
"sent men and women to the stake because they were
"not *Catholics*, and he sent *Catholics* to the stake,
"because they would not acknowledge the king's su-
"premacy, and thereby perjure themselves as he had
"so often done. Become openly a Protestant, in
"EDWARD's reign, and openly professing those very
"principles for the professing of which he had burnt
"others, he now *burnt his fellow-Protestants* because
"their grounds for protesting were *different from his*.
"As executor of the will of his old master, HENRY,
"which gave the crown (after EDWARD) to his
"daughters, MARY and ELIZABETH, he conspired with
"others, to rob those two daughters of their right, and
"to give the crown to Lady JANE GREY, that queen
"of nine days, whom he with others, ordered to be
"proclaimed. Confined, notwithstanding his many
"monstrous crimes, merely to the palace at Lambeth,
"he, in requital of the queen's lenity, plotted with
"traitors in the pay of France to overset her govern-
"ment. Brought, at last, to trial and to condemnation
"as a heretic, he professed himself ready to *recant*.
"He was respiteed for six weeks, during which time he
"signed *six different forms of recantation*, each more

"ample than the former. He declared that the Pro-
"testant religion was *false*; that the Catholic religion
"was the *only true one*; that he now believed in all
"the doctrines of the Catholic Church; that he had
"been a horrid blasphemer against the sacrament; that
"he was unworthy of forgiveness; that he prayed the
"People, the Queen, and the Pope, to have pity on,
"and to pray for his wretched soul; and that he had
"made and signed this declaration without fear, and
"without hope of favour; and for the discharge of his
"conscience, and as a warning to others. It was a
"question in the queen's council, whether he should be
"pardoned, as other recanters had been; but it was
"resolved that his crimes were so enormous that it
"would be unjust to let him escape; to which might
"have been added, that it could have done the Catholic
"Church no honour to see reconciled to it a wretch
"covered with robberies, perjuries, treasons and blood-
"shed. Brought, therefore, to the *public reading* of
"his recantation, on his way to the stake; seeing the
"pile ready; now *finding that he must die*, and
"carrying in his breast all his malignity undiminished,
"he *recanted his recantation*, thrust into the fire the
"hand that had signed it, and thus expired, protesting
"against that very religion in which, only nine hours
"before, he had called God to witness that he firmly
"believed!"

Now, not one of these facts can be denied; but, at the very least, we know that he was an apostate, a perjurer, and a murderer: and we know that the Act, which enacted the Prayer Book, tells us that he was at the head of those persons who, "with the aid of the Holy Ghost," composed that Prayer Book.

The second of these Acts of Parliament is 1st ELIZABETH, chapter 2, which re-enacts the former Act, and adds to the severity of its provisions. The third is 13th ELIZABETH, chapter 12, relating to the *Articles of religion*; and excluding from all share in the tithes,

or any other Church-property, all persons who will not swear to, and subscribe those articles.

These Acts of Parliament, having been read with due care, you see clearly "*how there came to be an Established Church;*" and you are able to answer at once the question, whether this Church have any rights, or can have any rights, other than those which it derives from Acts of the Parliament. This is now a matter of the greatest possible importance; for now, at the distance of 287 years from the time of passing the Act of EDWARD the Sixth, which first made the Church and the Prayer Book, the Parliament (still sitting at Westminster) has to discuss the question; and is now actually, indeed, engaged in the discussion of the question; *whether this Church stands on prescription, or on Acts of Parliament.* I have laid before you the Acts by which it was made; by which it was created; from which it entirely sprang, and had its being; and I defy any man to discover any circumstance which can give it a pretence for claiming any right not founded on these Acts of Parliament.

What a Parliament can *do*, a Parliament can *undo*. If there be property of any sort, that a Parliament can take from one description of persons, and give it to another description of persons, a Parliament can take that same property again, and dispose of it in a similar, or in any other manner. This, Parsons, is what you are so much afraid of now! I, for instance, would take away the whole of the property from you, and dispose of it in another manner; others would not go so far; but you have cunning enough to perceive that, if once a beginning is made, no one can tell where we are to end. Therefore it is that you and your partizans contend that you have *a right of prescription*, such as a man has to an estate, purely private; that your right of possession is *beyond all the inquiries of law*, and that a Parliament must be a tyrant, and guilty of rapine, if, by its acts, it alienate any part of your property.

Those who hold this doctrine forget its inevitable effect on the titles of all the holders of abbey-lands, and all the lay-holders of tithes. There are, very frequently, lay-holders of oblations too ; but, for clearness and simplicity's sake, I will confine myself, for the present, to the *lay-tithes*. These tithes, which are now deemed private property, were taken from the Church, were taken from the parochial clergy, and granted to the king ; and by him granted to private persons ; and thus were totally alienated from the Church. Do you say that this was an act of rapine ? Do you say that the Parliament had no rightful power to do this ? Do you say that this law was contrary to the rights of prescription, and the laws of God ; and that, therefore, according to the maxims of our law, it was no law at all, but an act of rapine ; So said the people of England at the time ; and the people actually refused to yield their tithes to laymen, pleading the law of God ; denying that any Parliament had a right to pass a law authorising laymen to receive tithes.

But those who had passed the laws which took the tithes from the Church and the poor, and put them into their own hands, soon found the means of compelling the people to submit to it, whether it were rapine or not. The Act 27th, HENRY the Eighth, chapter 20 ; after stating that "divers numbers of evil disposed persons inhabited in sundry counties, having no respect to their duties to *Almighty God*," &c., had "subtracted, or withheld parts or the whole of their tithes, under pretence of their tithes being demanded by *laypersons*," proceeds to enact various punishments for such subtracting, or withholding. Five years afterwards, when the second great Act of plundering the monasteries had taken place, another Act was passed, still more strictly enforcing the yielding of tithes to lay-persons. The accusation against the people was stated thus, in the preamble to this Act : "That the people, not regarding their duties to Almighty God,

"subtracted and withdrew the lawful and accustomed tithes of corn, hay, pasture, and other sorts of tithes and oblations due to the owners, proprietors, and possessors of parsonages, vicarages, and other ecclesiastical places ; being the *more encouraged thereto*, for that divers of the owners of the said parsonages, vicarages, tithes, and oblations are *laypersons.*" Then the Act goes on to give to these lay-persons all the rights of the clergy as to suing in the ecclesiastical courts, which they could not do without an Act for the purpose.

After the minor plunder of the chantries, of the guilds and fraternities and hospitals, it was necessary to pass another Act (2nd and 3rd EDWARD the Sixth, chapter 13), to enforce these Acts of HENRY the Eighth, and to compel payment of tithes to laymen upon the footing of the clergy, as to the manner of suing for the same.

Here, then, are all these Acts of Parliament proving, that in spite of the opposition of the people, that in spite of their deep sense of the injustice, that in the face of all the former laws of the country, the Parliament had the rightful power to take away both the predial and personal tithes ; and to give them to laymen, and to vest them, as an estate, in laymen.

Now, then, if this were not an act of rapine, if it were a thing that a Parliament could rightfully do, what pretence have you for saying, that this present Parliament cannot rightfully deal with the remainder of the tithes, in any manner that they may think proper? And if it were an act of rapine, then all the laws relative to abbey-lands, all the laws relative to the tithes, all the laws relative to the Church Establishment, are to be considered as no laws at all. If you plead that the Parliament has no right to take away, or alienate, that which is called Church-property, you must insist that no layman has a good title to tithes ; but you cannot do this without, at the same time, denying the validity

of those Acts of Parliament, to which, and to which alone, you owe your own right of possession to tithes, to oblations, to any part, or particle of that which you possess. So that it comes to this at last, that either all was rapine, all was directly contrary to the laws of God ; and therefore null ; or all your possessions and privileges have their foundation in Acts of Parliament, in Acts of Parliament alone, and may therefore be all taken away by the rightful power of the Parliament.

There are some persons who contend that the Parliament has the rightful power to make *regulations* with regard to the property of the Church ; to make a *new distribution* of it amongst the bishops, deans, parsons, and so forth ; but that, though there may be too much property found lodged in certain hands, and though the rightful power of the Parliament to make a more desirable distribution is undoubted, still that power does not extend so far as to *the taking of it away from the Church altogether*; and that, if it be taken from parsons, bishops, and so forth, it must be applied to some purposes or other tending to the upholding and to the efficiency of the Established Church ; and the purposes of education are generally named, which is about as curious a whim as ever entered into the head of mortal man. Why, what is the Established Church for ? For what does its clergy swallow up from five to eight millions a year ? If for any thing of public benefit, it must be for the purpose of *instructing the people in religion* ; that is to say, for educating the people in the principles of true religion. Why, then, take the money away from the parsons and give it to somebody else, that they may teach the people ? Besides, if the tithes be taken from the parsons, and their amount given to schoolmasters, there is, in fact, an alienation from the Church. It is, then, a mere matter of expediency ; and the only question is, *would it be good for the people* ; good for the people in general, of this kingdom, *to take the whole of the property*

from the clergy, or would it not? This is the only question to be entertained on the subject by rational men. I am of opinion that it would be good to do it; and before I have done, I shall clearly and frankly state all my reasons for being of that opinion.

The first question, “How CAME THERE TO BE AN ESTABLISHED CHURCH?” I have now answered; I have stated, and clearly shown, the motives for the making of this Church; I have shewn the manner in which it was made; I have given a true picture of the character and conduct of the makers of it; I have exhibited to the view of the reader the severities, the cruelties, the ferocious, the more than savage punishments by which its introduction was enforced; I have, above all things, shown that it originated in Acts of Parliament; that it rests solely on Acts of Parliament for every fragment of possession that it has; and that it, and all that belongs to it, may now be disposed of by the rightful power of the Parliament, in any manner, and for any purpose, that the Parliament may deem to be proper; and now I shall, in the next letter, proceed to show “How THERE CAME TO BE PEOPLE CALLED DISSENTERS.”

LETTER II.

HOW CAME THERE TO BE PEOPLE CALLED DISSENTERS?

Parsons,

Amongst all the qualities for which the Church, as by law established, is distinguished from every other body of men in the world, the quality of cool impudence stands very conspicuous. A Church parson always argues with you, or talks with you, as if you admitted *in limine*, that his Church is the only true Church of Christ now in the world, or that there ever was in the world;

and that all which those who differ from it can pretend to, is a somewhat mitigated degree of error. One would have thought that men who, from being Roman Catholics, had become of TOM CRANMER's religion, and enacted his Prayer Book ; who had afterwards enacted that his Prayer Book was schismatical, and had gone upon their knees to receive absolution from the Pope for having made it ; and had recorded, in an Act of Parliament, this absolution that they had recently received from the Pope ; and had enacted all the circumstances and acts connected with the making of this Prayer Book to have been unlawful and impious ; and who had, after that, re-enacted this same Prayer Book : one would have thought that, at any rate, after all this, they would not have had the audacity to set up a title to *infallibility* ; and to claim a right to compel all other men to adopt a belief in any thing, be it what it might, which they chose to adopt as their creed ; to call those who would not conform to this their will by the disrespectful name of *Dissenters* ; that is to say, *fallers away from the true faith*, and not entitled to the ordinary benefit of the law ; and when it suited the purpose of the Church-makers, as liable to some sort of punishment. Yet this is what these Church-makers did ; and on these principles they have acted even unto the present day ; though now (from causes which we shall by and by have to state) they begin to discover some misgivings ; and to profess to be willing to yield up a portion of their enormous pretensions.

When the Roman Catholic Church had been broken up, when its clergy had been ousted, when its property had been confiscated and scattered, when the faith, which the people in general had lived in for nine hundred years, had been declared to be erroneous, when the worship, which they had practised for that length of time, had been stigmatized as idolatrous and damnable, what rightful power was there, or could there be on earth, to command the people to adopt any par-

ticular *new faith*, or any *new worship*? What rightful power could there be to make a whole nation conform to any rule of faith or of worship prescribed by any person or set of persons? and especially, what rightful power could there be in those who had abrogated the Prayer Book after they had made it, and had called it schismatical; what rightful power could they ever have had to bend the necks of the whole nation, and to compel them to adopt a religion, to adopt creeds, and a form of worship which they themselves had begged pardon of Almighty GOD for having invented?

This question is monstrous; and so monstrous is the proposition that it embraces, that it is to be answered only by indignant feelings; no words can furnish a suitable answer. The ancient religion of the country having been overturned and put down by law, by law indeed, aided by the bayonet, every man was left, of course, to choose a religion for himself. Every man had the Bible in his hand; he had a conscience in his breast; and it was for him to consider and determine what that Bible taught him to believe, and the sort of worship it taught him to practise. JESUS CHRIST was no longer upon earth; the apostles were gone; that which the nation had so long believed had been founded by them and their successors in authority, that was now gone too; the distribution of the Church-property; its application to charitable purposes, this was gone. And in such a state of things justice demanded that the people should be left to themselves to choose their mode of worshipping GOD; and that the national property called Church-property should be applied to the uses of the nation in general, and not grasped for the sole use of any particular set of men.

That this was the general way of thinking of the people, at the time, there can be no doubt; for CRANMER'S Church was hardly born before there were plenty of people to *protest* against it. To call them *Protestants* would not do; because that was the name

given to those who had protested against the Catholic Church ; and besides, that was a name designed to be held in honour. There were Baptists ; there were Calvinists ; there were great numbers of persons of different opinions, as there naturally would be in such a state of things. The Prayer Book Church-makers having the property in their hands, and resolved to keep it, proscribed all these conscientious sets of persons under the general names of Non-conformists, Sectarians, or Dissenters ; and they soon found the means of keeping them in a state of the most abject subjection ; though they had not a shadow of rightful power for so doing.

The Dissenters, as we must now call those Protestants who refused to subscribe the creeds and articles of the Church, objected to those creeds and to the Church worship, some for one reason and some for another ; but it is a curious fact that they all agreed most cordially in one objection ; namely, to *the uniting of the spiritual supremacy of the Church with the temporal supremacy of the state* ; they all insisted, and most perseveringly, on this, which they called an “unscriptural union :” such they call it unto this day ; and hence their united demand for a separation of the Church from the state ; and it is truly curious, that though they were Roman Catholics, the two most learned and most virtuous men of that age, or of almost any age, Sir THOMAS MOORE, and Bishop FISHER, died upon the scaffold, rather than acknowledge the lawfulness of the union of Church and State.

Indeed, if one looks at the thing in a religious point of view, it is perfectly monstrous. In the first place, that a mere lay-person, not having studied divinity ; not having any character of religious teacher about him ; being essentially a soldier ; being essentially a magistrate bearing the sword ; that such a person should be the head of the Church of Christ ; have the supremacy over that Church in spiritual matters ;

and we having the example of the Apostles before us, as to the government of the Church, and as to the selecting and appointing of bishops and other spiritual guides : this alone, upon the mere face of it, might have been an excuse for conscientious men objecting to this establishment. Then, as to the mode of selecting and appointing bishops, and the practice called the *Congé d'élire*. Mr. Baron MASERES, who was so many years Cursitor Baron of the Exchequer ; who was descended from a Huguenot ; who was a very staunch Protestant ; who was also a staunch Churchman for a great many years of his very long life, and who certainly was as good a man as ever breathed ; wrote and published a little book, which he called the “*Moderate Reformer*.” In this book he strongly recommended the discontinuance of the practice of the *Congé d'élire*, that being a thing which he deemed most injurious to the character of the Church.

The *Congé d'élire* is a *leave to elect* ; that is to say, a leave given by the King as Head of the Church, to the dean and chapter of a diocese, to elect a bishop. When they receive this leave from the King they meet ; and after the religious ceremony and invocations suitable to the occasion, the dean, I suppose it is, pulls out of his pocket the name of the man whom the King has given them leave to *elect* ! Now, is there any man of sense and reason in the world who will say that it was just to compel all the people of ENGLAND to conform to the belief, that this was agreeable to the will of the Author of the Christian religion ?

But the *headship of the Church* does not in this exhibit any thing like all its objectionable parts : a woman may be the head of the Church, as women twice have been in England ; a boy, or a little girl ; nay, a baby in arms ; nay, further, one not yet born, supposing the king to die while the queen is pregnant with an heir to the throne, may be the *head of the Church of Christ in England* ; to say nothing of the

possibility of this *headship* being possessed by persons bereft of their senses !

Here, then, in this one thing, will any man say, that there was not enough to make conscientious men hesitate before they consented to belong to this Church ? Will any one say, that it was right to stigmatize, and to exclude from the ordinary benefits of the law, men who could not bring themselves to bend to this ? will any one say that it was just to inflict penalties on men because they, with the Gospels and the Epistles in their hands, refused to conform to an establishment like this ? However, stigmatized and punished they were. Cranmer burnt several of them for protesting against his Church ; and as to ELIZABETH, her forty-five years reign were forty-five years of the most ferocious punishments inflicted on this conscientious part of her subjects. I beg the reader, if he wish to possess a thorough knowledge of the treatment of the persons called Dissenters ; of the treatment which the forefathers of the present Dissenters received at the hands of the Established Church and its head, to read, if his boiling blood will permit him to read, the Act 35th ELIZABETH, chapter I, entitled "*An Act to retain the Queen's Majesty's Subjects in their due Obedience,*" which Act begins thus : " For the preventing and avoiding of " such great inconveniences and perils as might happen " and grow oy the wicked and dangerous practices of " seditious Sectaries and disloyal persons, be it enacted, " &c." The reader will observe that this had nothing at all to do with the Roman Catholics, for the scourging, and racking, and ripping up of whom the Church-makers had other Acts of Parliament. This Act was purely against *Protestant Dissenters* ; or as the Act calls them, *Non-conformists* ; that is to say, that conscientious part of the people who would not conform to that Prayer Book Church, which, by the authors of it themselves, had been called "*Schismatical and wicked,*" and for having made which they had supplicated the Pope to give them absolution.

At this time the Dissenters were very numerous, as they naturally would be. There were already laws to exclude them from all emoluments of office ; from the benefits of the Universities ; and to compel them to pay tithes, Church-rates, and oblations, and dues, to the clergy of the Church : there were already laws to *imprison them for life*, and to cause thousands upon thousands to die in prison under their persecution ; however, they *still increased* ; and this Act was intended totally to put them down, or to expel them from the country of their birth, or to kill them. But there was a difficulty in discovering *who were* and *who were not* Dissenters. Divers schemes were resorted to for this purpose ; but at last the Church-makers fell upon the scheme contained in this Act, which was simply this : *to compel all the people to go to the churches regularly*, and there to join in the performance of Divine service, and in the use of the *Common Prayer*. All persons, of whatever rank or degree, above the age of sixteen years, who refused to go to some church or chapel, or place of common prayer ; or who persuaded any other person not to go, or who should be at any conventicle, or meeting, under colour or pretence of any exercise of any religion other than that ordered by the state ; then every such person was to be committed to prison, there to remain until he should be ordered to come to some church or usual place of common prayer, and there make an open *submission* and *declaration* of his conformity, in these following words : "I, A B, do
"humbly confess and acknowledge that I have grievously
"offended God in contemning her Majesty's lawful
"government and authority, by absenting myself from
"Church, and in using unlawful conventicles and
"assemblies, under pretence and colour of exercise of
"religion ; and I am heartily sorry for the same ;
"and I do acknowledge and testify in my conscience
"that no person hath, or ought to have, any power or
"authority over her Majesty ; and I do promise that I

" will from time to time repair to the Church and hear " divine service, and do my utmost endeavour to defend " and maintain the same."

Now, what was the punishment, in case of disobedience here? The offender was to " abjure the realm ;" that is to say, was to *banish himself for life* ; and, if he failed to do this; if he did not get out of the kingdom in the course of such time as should be appointed by the authority of the queen ; or, if he returned into the kingdom, without her leave, such person so offending " was to be adjudged a " felon, and was to suffer, as in cases of felony, with- " out benefit of clergy ;" that is to say, suffer the sentence due to arson or murder ; to be hanged by the neck till he was dead !

Gentle Church ! Mild Church ! Sweet Christian Chureh ; most " amiable establishment !" This was the way that you went to work to convert the people to your doctrines, and to induce them to attend your worship. " This was a *great while ago* ." Yes, it was a great while ago ; but it is very necessary for us of this day to know what it was ; and that this Act continued in force, until the first year of WIL- LIAM AND MARY, when it was only a little mitigated ; the Church always sticking firmly to this law. This was a law which said to all the people ; " Come and " hear our Prayer Book read, the amiable history of " which you know so well ; come in person, and declare " your belief in our creeds, and join in the repeating of " our Prayer Book ; which was made by Act of Par- " liament, abrogated as schismatical by another Act of " Parliament. and then made by Act of Parliament " again : come and openly profess your sincere belief " in all this ; or, be banished for life ; or, be hanged by " the neck till you be dead !"

What a strange thing that the Dissenters should be so perverse, as to bear something like animosity towards this " amiable establishment," which you parsons tell

us, has always been “the *most tolerant* Church that “ever was heard of in the world.” One cannot help laughing; one’s horror is so great that it ends at last in ridicule at the monstrousness of this thing, continuing in full force, too, through the rest of the reign of this horrible woman; through that of JAMES the First; CHARLES the First; CHARLES the Second; and never attempted to be mitigated until JAMES the Second made the attempt, and which attempt was the real cause of the loss of the throne to him and his family for ever.

Parsons, you always talk of this Church, as if it had been established by the *common consent of the people*; as if it had arisen out of their will; and had been their work, and not the work of the aristocracy; and you always represent the Dissenters as *unreasonable* and *perverse* in withdrawing from it, or not joining it: you always speak of the makers of this Church as zealous and pious men, acting in conformity to the will of the people. You forget to tell us, that, even in its very dawn; that at the very introduction of the Common Prayer Book into the Churches, even at the very first stripping of the altars, and the priests of their vestments; you forget to tell us, that the people complained and remonstrated all over the kingdom; that they demanded the return of their ancient religion; that they complained that they had been reduced to the state of pack-horses, while the nobility and gentry were wallowing in newly acquired wealth. Those who have read my History of the Protestant Reformation, know all this to be true; they know that the people rose in insurrection in several parts of ENGLAND; and that they were brought into the bosom of the Prayer-Book Church, in the reign of EDWARD, by pious exhortations, no doubt, but with the aid of *good well-tempered German bayonets*; as you will see in Protestant Reformation, paragraph 212.

You never tell us of the famous ecclesiastical Com-

mision, established in the reign of ELIZABETH, in virtue of the very first Act of her reign, clauses, 17, 18, and 19. In virtue of the authority given her by this Act, 1 ELIZABETH, chapter 1, she appointed a Commission, consisting of certain *bishops* and others, whose power extended over the whole kingdom, and over all ranks and degrees of people. They were empowered to have an absolute control *over the opinions* of all men, and, merely at their *own discretion*, to inflict any punishment, short of death, on any person whatsoever. If they chose, they might proceed legally, in the obtaining of evidence against parties; but, if they chose, they might employ *imprisonment*, the *rack*, or *torture* of any sort for this purpose. If their suspicions alighted upon any man, no matter respecting what, and they had no evidence, nor even an *hearsay* against him, they might administer an *oath* called *ex officio*, to him, by which he was bound, if called upon, to *reveal his thoughts*, and to accuse himself, his friend, his brother, his father, *upon pain of death!* These monsters inflicted what fines they pleased; they imprisoned men for any length of time that they pleased; they put forth whatever *new articles of faith* they pleased; and, in short, they had an absolute control over the bodies and the minds of the whole of the people; and, observe, this act remained in force until the 16th year of CHARLES the First, when it was repealed by chapter 11 of that year.

Parsons, perhaps you will tell us, that *your Church* had nothing to do with this; that this was the work of *the queen*. She was the *head* of your Church, at any rate; but, observe, the Commission was composed of *Bishops*, chiefly; bishops of the Prayer-Book Church were at the head of this Commission.

The Commission was for the purpose, and for the sole purpose of punishing people for not conforming to the Church; and, are we to be made to believe, that the Church did *not approve* of this Commission; es-

pecially, when we never heard of such a thing as any Bishop, or any one belonging to the Church, protesting against the use of these horrible means of sustaining it.

In like manner you wash your hands of all the savage butcheries of this reign, during which more Englishmen were slaughtered in one year for offences, made such by Act of Parliament, for the sole purpose of upholding this Church, than were put to death for all offences whatsoever, during the whole of the reign of the "*Bloody Queen MARY*;" more slaughtered in one year, for offences made by Acts of Parliament to support this Church, than were slaughtered, even in the massacre of St. Bartholomew, if we include the deaths in prison, and the deaths occasioned by banishment. The historian, STRYPE (he was a *Protestant*), tells us, that the queen executed more than five hundred criminals in one year, and was so little satisfied with that number that she threatened to send private persons to see her laws executed, *for "profit and gain's sake."*

It is impossible to look at the origin and the progress of this Church without believing that it caused greater cruelties to be inflicted; a greater mass of human suffering to be endured than ever was occasioned by any religious establishment in the world. There have been *religious wars*, there have been *crusades*, but these have been *wars*. These have been *fights* of one nation, or part of a nation, against another; that is quite another matter: it is army against army, it is not the cold blooded operations of law; and I am satisfied that the history of the world furnishes no instance of so much human suffering inflicted in cold blood, as was inflicted for the establishment and the upholding of this Church, which nevertheless has the cool impudence to call itself "*the most tolerant Church in the world.*"

Perverse creatures, then, these Dissenters must be, to feel anything like a prejudice against this "*amiable establishment*!" Monstrous impudence; impudence so great, that one cannot find words to express suitable

indignation against it ; monstrous impudence, to pretend, that it is granting a *favour* to Dissenters, to suffer them to be placed upon a level with those who belong to, or pretend to belong to, this Church ! Monstrous impudence, to pretend that they have not as great a right to all the ecclesiastical possessions, of every sort, as you, the parsons, have ! For my part I hear them with contempt when they come crawling for what they call a “*redress of their grievances.*” Why, the domination of the Church is a grievance altogether. We are all grieved alike by its existence. It ought never to have been such as it has been. But of these matters I shall speak more fully in my next letter ; having here answered the question, “*How there came to be people called Dissenters;*” having given an account of their rise, their progress, and of the horrible attempts made to extirpate them, by this Church, as by law established ; for again and again I protest against the idea, that these horrible laws and ferocious cruelties were committed against the will, or without the concurrence of the Church. The atrocious act of ELIZABETH (35th of her reign, chapter 1) could not have been passed without the concurrence of the bishops and the clergy ; they were to be the executors of the law, or to see the law executed ; they were to receive the submission and declaration of conformity ; the minister of the parish was to make a *record* of the submission, and he was to make a report of it to the *bishop* ; so that here it was a church affair altogether. Therefore we are not to be shuffled off with the pretence that it was a mere act of the secular power of the State.

Indeed (and this is what we never ought to lose sight of), we always find the clergy of the Church working busily in all these things ; we so find them from the days of Cranmer down to the late French war ; aye, and down to the days of Sidmouth and Castlereagh. At this moment, indeed, they seem to have become more “tolerant ;” they seem to begin to

perceive that at last they must give way. Still their partizans cling to their pretended rights; and therefore it is necessary that we now look well into those rights; and it will be prudent in the Dissenters not to express their content with any change short of a complete putting an end to the abuse, from the top to the bottom. We shall see enough of the *present state* of this Church in a subsequent letter; we shall see in what degree it can possibly be a *religious instruetor*; above all things we shall see who it is that now pocket its revenues; we shall see how those revenues are employed for the "*cure of souls*;" and when we have seen these clearly, I trust there will be found spirit and sense enough left in this nation to insist upon complete redress of this mighty grievance; for if this redress be not had, to have reformed the Parliament will have been a gross deception; a mere contrivance to amuse the people with vain hopes never to be realized; and in fact to prevent a redress of this, as well as of every other wrong, of which the industrious millions of this oppressed and impoverished people so loudly and so justly complain.

LETTER III.

WHAT IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE DOMINATION OF THE CHURCH OVER THE DISSENTERS?

Parsons,

I know you will say, "the *Law* gives us this "domination." I know it does; and, for that very reason, I want the law altered; I want the law repealed that gives this domination to you; and, with that object in view, I ask, "what is the *foundation*" of the present law?

Rightful domination, or mastership, has these foundations, or one of them; the immediate *gift of God*;

conquest; hereditary property; purchase; paternal authority. Neither of these foundations has your audacious domination to rest on. Your pretence of being the *prescriptive successors* of the Roman Catholic Clergy would subject you to *their duties and laws*, as well as give you their possessions. These would compel you to keep the poor; to feed the stranger; to harbour the houseless; to abstain from marriage and all carnal intercourse; and would shut out all *bastards* from being ministers of Christ! *Blackstone* (Book 1, c. 16) “A BASTARD was incapable of *Holy Orders*: and though that were dispensed with, yet he was *utterly disqualified for holding any DIGNITY* in the Church: but, this doctrine *seems now obsolete*.” That is to say, it is *out of fashion!* Oh! it “*seems*,” does it. Faith, it a little more than *seems*; and this, I trust, we shall ascertain, by having the names of the parties before us, before we have done with the *bastardy clauses* of the Poor-law Bill. It a little more than “*seems*;” though there is *no law* for this departure from the ancient law, which, you will observe, was, and still is, the law of the land, independent of all Acts of Parliament.

But, as to this right of domination. Suppose it had been just to suppress the Roman Catholic Church; suppose, also, that it had been just to take away a large part of its property, and give it to the aristocracy; suppose that it had been just to oust and extirpate the Catholic priests; suppose that it had been just to do all these things, upon the ground of the Catholic religion being idolatrous and damnable. Admit all this for argument sake; still what ground was there for erecting another Church by law, and compelling *all Protestants* to submit to that new Church? The pretence for suppressing the ancient Church, be it what it might, furnished no ground for compelling *Protestants* to submit to another Church. The ancient religion having been declared to be bad, and having been

stripped of all its possessions, every man was free to choose a mode of worship for himself; and to pay his own priest, if he chose to have a priest. There was no rightful power anywhere to have control over the consciences of men: and it was tyranny; the most hateful tyranny, to attempt to exercise such control.

Still, however, if a decided *majority of the people* had been for the establishment of this new Church; then, as questions in such cases must be decided by the majority of voices, the present Church might plead something like a *legitimate origin*; and, indeed, her partizans contend that *she had this decided majority of the people with her*. WHITTAKER, in his book exposing the murderous character of Elizabeth, observes, that she had given to her, very unjustly, the character of *maker of the Protestant Established Church*; "that Church," says he, "arose out of the piety, the good sense, and the common consent of the people of England." WHITTAKER, who took up the cause of MARY Queen of Scots, was a most zealous churchman, nevertheless; and was as unjust towards the Catholics and the Dissenters, as he was just in the case of these two queens. There is no way of effectually closing up the mouth of these self-called historians, but by going to the *Statute Book*; and now let us hear what the Statute Book says upon this subject. We have seen in the preceding letters, that the Prayer Book was enacted in the year 1548. In the year 1552 (5 and 6 EDWARD the Sixth, chap. 1), there required an Act of Parliament to *compel people* to go to the churches to hear this Prayer Book. The preamble to this Act sets forth, "that great numbers of people in divers parts of the realm do wilfully and damnably abstain and refuse to come to their parish churches." Then the Act proceeds to order all and every person inhabiting within the realm to come to the churches, to assist at the prayer, and to hear the preaching; it next charges the *bishops* and others to endeavour to

their utmost to get the people to their churches, and *to punish* the refractory by all the *censures* and *powers of punishment* which they possessed ; it concludes by inflicting penalties on all those who should attend or assist at the performance of any *other sort of worship*, whether Catholic or Protestant ; for the first offence, six months' imprisonment ; for the second offence, imprisonment for a year ; for the third offence, *imprisonment for life !*

This severity brought Dissenters to the churches, and into the church-yards. In those churches and church-yards they disputed about religion. Some disliked the new Church for one cause ; some for another ; and, therefore, an Act was passed in the same year (5 and 6 EDWARD the Sixth, chap. 4), intituled “*Against quarrelling and fighting in churches and church-yards.*” The preamble sets forth, “*Forasmuch as of late, divers and many outrageous and barbarous behaviours and acts have been used and committed by divers ungodly and irreligious persons, by quarrelling, brawling, frayning, and fighting, in churches and church-yards.*” Then on goes the Act, delivering over to the *spiritual authority* all the offenders. If one laid violent hands on another, or smote another, sentence of excommunication, with all its consequences, was to be passed upon the offender. If any one smote another with a *weapon*, or drew a weapon to smite him with, he was to *have one of his ears cut off* ; and now mark, parsons : if the offender *had no ears*, then he was to be burnt in the cheek with the letter F, signifying *fray-maker* or *fighter* ; and was to be excommunicated besides. This Act remains, in great part, in force to this very day ; and under it hundreds of persons have been, within my recollection, imprisoned and ruined ; and let the people of this insulted country now remember, and well remember, that they owe this barbarous law solely to the establishment of this Church.

When MARY came to the throne after this boy-king, these Acts were swept away. The Prayer Book Church was gone, and there needed no more cutting-off of ears, or burnings in the cheek. But can we proceed any further without expressing our horror, that England should have been reduced to such a state, that it was necessary to provide, in an Act of Parliament, for the contingency of offenders *having no ears to be cut off!* What effect the new Church had had upon their consciences and morals we may guess, when it had had such an astonishing effect upon their ears ! In short, it was a continual fight ; not with the Catholics, but amongst Protestants of different descriptions, from the hour that the Prayer Book Act was passed, until MARY came to the throne and swept away all these Acts, and restored the Catholic religion. Then, if all was not harmony ; and all could not be harmony after what had passed ; still, however, there required no Acts of Parliament to compel the people to go to church ; there required neither death, nor imprisonment, nor banishment, nor anything else, to effect this purpose. She wished to make all her subjects Roman Catholics ; she wished all her subjects to attend mass ; but she left it to themselves, as far as related to their personal attendance at worship ; she did not *compel* them to be guilty of what they deemed *blasphemy*.

Will it be said that this contest amongst the Protestants was but of *short duration* : that it was in the heat of disputation, natural enough upon such a change ; but that the people all became *very soon* of one mind ; and that, therefore, the brawlings and fightings are not to be looked upon as anything serious as to the character of this new Church. Now observe ; the bloody Act of ELIZABETH, giving the people a choice of three things, conformity ; that is, coming to church, making public confession of belief and adhesion to the new religion, promising not to profess any other religion, or attend at any other place of worship, and of having this sub-

mission recorded in a book by the parson of the parish . this was one of the things that they had to choose amongst. Not being able to bring their consciences to bend to this, they were to abjure the realm, and banish themselves for life. Not being able to bring themselves to leave behind them for ever, wives, children, parents, brethren, and all that they held dear in the world, there remained to them, *to be hanged by the neck till they were dead*; and, observe, this Act applied purely and expressly to *Protestant Dissenters*; and that, by the 12th clause of the Act (35 ELIZABETH, chapter 1), Roman Catholics were *excepted* from the provisions of the Act, there being other Acts for them of a still more horrible description.

And now the most material observation of all, with regard to this point, remains to be made ; and that is this, that this Act was passed *at the end of forty-one years* of attempts to enforce this Protestant Established Church. EDWARD had had six years' attempt at it, with all his horrible punishments ; and now this she tyrant, the most cruel that ever existed in the world, had to pass this Act, at the end of thirty-five years of her merciless doings ; so that, after forty-one years of punishments of all sorts ; after thousands had *died in prison* ; after privations, exclusions, fines, amercements, and disqualifications as to property, trades, and professions ; at the end of forty-one years of this horrid work, it required banishment for life, or hanging on the gallows, to compel the Protestants of England to bring their bodies within the walls of the places where this worship of the Established Church was performed ! What plea have you then, parsons ; what ground have you for asserting ; what had WHITTAKER to bear him out in the allegation, that this Church arose out of the *common consent* ; out of the movements of the consciences ; out of the zeal and the piety of the people ; and that the Church was established by the love of the people for it ; and not by the acts of any king or queen, or those of

their Parliaments ? Let it be observed that this Act ; that this banishing-and-hanging Act continued in full force, as to all the main parts of its provisions, until it was altered by the Act 1st of WILLIAM and MARY, session 1, chapter 18 ; and that it is very far from being swept clean away even unto this hour.

The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts took place in 1828 ; these Acts were passed in the reign of CHARLES the Second ; the Act 25 CHARLES the Second, chap 2, and the Act 13 CHARLES Second, statute 2, chapter 1, excluded from all offices in corporations, and from all offices of trust and emolument under the Crown, all persons who should not receive *the Sacrament according to the rights and ceremonies of the Established Church*, within one year next before their election in such corporations, or their appointment to such offices. Now, will you have the audacity to pretend that *the Church* was not the *instigator* to the passing of these Acts of Parliament ? Every one must see that it tended to keep all powers and all emoluments of the whole country in the hands of the aristocracy, of whom, indeed, the Church is, in fact, the property. Was it from *piety* ; from motives of *pure religion* ; from a desire to *save the souls* of men, that this compulsion to take the sacrament in this particular manner was imposed ; and is it not manifest that it was imposed for the purposes of exclusion ? The Corporation Act, as it is usually called, is intituled, “An Act for the *well-governing* and regulating of “Corporations ;” and the preamble states, that many evil spirits were working, and that it was necessary to perpetuate corporations in the hands of persons well affected to his Majesty and the established government ; then the Act proceeds to enact, amongst other things, that no man shall have a post in a corporation unless he receive the sacrament according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England. The Test Act (25th CHARLES the Second, chapter 2), is intituled,

"An Act to prevent dangers that may happen from *Popish recusants*;" but, before it has done, it includes Dissenters; for it makes it necessary for *any* person holding *any* office, *civil* or *military*, or receiving any pay, salary, fee, or wages, or who shall be in any place of command or of trust from, or under the king, or by authority derived from him, or shall be in the navy, or in the islands of JERSEY and GUERNSEY, and who shall not receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper, according to the usage of the Church of ENGLAND, shall lose his said post or employment; and that, in future, no man shall have any such post, unless he bring from some *bishop*, *priest*, or other ecclesiastic, a certificate that he has received the said sacrament in manner aforesaid. These Acts remained in force, as I observed before, until they were repealed upon the motion of Lord JOHN RUSSELL, in the year 1828; which Act was cried up as a redressing of all the wrongs of the *Dissenters*; of which I will say more presently.

But, upon what ground were these Acts repealed? Why, upon the ground that they were *unjust*; upon the ground that they inflicted great *wrongs*; upon the ground that they were passed against *common right*. Upon no other ground could the repeal have taken place. There was no expediency now that had not always existed. But what did this repeal do for the Dissenters in general? The persons who were candidates for offices in corporations, and in employments under the king; the Dissenters of this description were very few in number, compared with the millions of Dissenters. Yet this repeal was represented to be *all* that the Dissenters ever could ask for! The very repeal of the Acts acknowledged them to have been wrongful; yet, what were these Acts, which merely shut men out from public employments, compared with the bloody Acts which we have before seen, by which the Church was introduced and upheld by the ruin or the killing of the people who dissented from it?

However, this repeal left all the great and substantial grievances remaining. It left the Dissenters just where they were before with regard to these grievances; it left them to have their *marriages* solemnized by the Established Church, or to be without the quality of legality; it compelled them to have recourse to the Church, in order to secure legal proof of their *births* and their *deaths*; it shut them out of the *Universities*; but above all things, it left them that grievance of all grievances; that flagrant and intolerant injustice, of rendering *tithes* and *oblations*, of paying *rates* and *dues*, to support a clergy and an establishment, which, from the beginning, their forefathers had conscientiously dissented from; and from which they still dissented, more strongly than ever, if possible, with regard, as well to its doctrines, as to its ritual and its discipline; and the whole of which they will now learn from the Statute-Book were declared, by the very authors of them (1 MARY, 2nd session, chapter 2) to be *schismatical*; and were, by them, swept away accordingly!

If the Test and Corporation Acts were wrongful; and they were so; and it was right and just to repeal them; why not repeal all the other grievances? By what law of God; by what possible interpretation of any part of the Holy Scriptures; by what plea of prescription; by what reason, or operation of common sense, does this Church claim a right to bring Dissenters before it to solemnize their marriages, according to a written service which never had their sanction? An expedient has now been fallen upon to redress, as it is called, this grievance. Marriages are to be contracted, it seems, now, *before the civil magistrate*; but still the Church keeps its hand upon them, according to the intention which has been stated in the Parliament. The *parson* is to record them in his *Church-book*, with the sum of five shillings to accompany each record. To be sure, this is taking out a great screw: this is rubbing out the dogma of the Church, that

marriage is essentially *a religious act*; and few people, I suppose, if this Act pass, will think it necessary to go to the Church to be married; for as to the declaration, that the parties *do not belong to the Church*, what is the meaning of those words? What is *belonging* to the Church; or being a *member* of the Church? Who does *belong* to the Church? All those who are baptized in the Church? It is notorious that nine-tenths of the present Dissenters were so baptized. If *belonging* to the Church means having *communicated* in the Church; having been confirmed by the bishops, and admitted to partake the communion, then I venture to say, that not one man in England out of *one thousand* belongs to the Church. However, though this is a giving way, it is a little movement after the manner of the hunted beaver, and it seems to illustrate the nature of all the rest of the grievances. If the law that compelled Dissenters to marry in the Church were just; if it were a law for the good of the people; why not persevere in it? And, if it were an unjust law, in what does it differ, I pray, from the laws inflicting the rest of the grievances?

What right, I should be glad to know, have the people of a particular faith or worship to compel all the rest (probably four times their number) to be buried with a ceremony which they disliked while alive; or else to be excluded from the church-yards, which are the common property of all the people; what right have they to prevent the bodies of Dissenters being brought into the church-yard with the performance of their own ceremony? What right has this corporation called the Church to arrogate to itself the right of excluding children from registry of birth, unless their parents subject them to a mode of baptism, against which they in their consciences protest? And with regard to the Universities, here is an immense mass of power and of property, civil and political privileges endless, emoluments arising from sources innu-

merable, honours and distinctions without end, besides immense *landed estates*. And why are Dissenters to be excluded from any of these? Is the ground of exclusion that they do not embrace that Prayer Book, which those who enacted it called by Act of Parliament *schismatical*, and which they afterwards re-enacted and forced upon the people, on pain of banishment for life, or hanging on the gallows? Is this the ground that they set up for excluding *other Protestants* from sharing in these estates, which were taken from the Catholics? The miserable dispute about the Dissenters not being suffered to take degrees in the Universities without first embracing the Common Prayer and the Act-of-Parliament Articles of Religion: the miserable dispute about this matter, the only alleged evil of which was, to retard, by three years, the progress of a Dissenter to the bar, or to the corporation of physicians and surgeons; which could not affect one Dissenter out of one hundred thousand, and which affected ninety-nine out of every hundred of Church Protestants who were going to the bar, or to medicine or surgery: this dispute always appeared to me to be most contemptible; and to be greatly mischievous too; because it seemed to imply that, as far as related to the Universities, this was *all* that the Dissenters had to complain of. This has, it seems, been smoothed over by the *benchers* and the *College of Physicians* agreeing to admit the aspirant Dissenters in the same manner as if they had taken degrees; and this too, observe, to the manifest injury of all the candidates for these professions who have not been able to pay money to the parsons of the Universities.

What the Dissenters have a right to, in this case, is, promotion in the Universities according to their learning, rank, and station there, according to their virtues and their talents; both of which they possess in a degree tenfold greater than the present possessors; but above all things they have a rightful claim to a

full share of the estates possessed by those bodies. The foundations, the endowments, were taken from the Catholics. If it be right that *Protestants* alone should possess them, they belong to *all the Protestants*; and what right can there be other than the right of the strongest, to give the whole to one description of Protestants and to exclude all the rest from any share? They are excluded because they are *Dissenters*. Dissenters *from what?* All Protestants are Dissenters from the Roman Catholic Church; and why are Dissenters of one sort to be preferred before those of another? Except, indeed, that those who are now called Dissenters have never attempted to fill their churches by laws to inflict banishment, or death, on those who refuse to attend.

The Universities, including the great schools, such as that at WINCHESTER, WESTMINSTER, ETON, and some others, were founded, after the introduction of the Christian religion, for the purpose of teaching those, and the children of those, who had not the means of obtaining teaching at their own expense, which is clearly proved by the statutes of these Universities. The fellows, or body of proprietors of the estates, were obliged to *swear* that they had *no income of their own above a certain small amount*: and indeed the great intention of all these establishments was, not to give learning to the sons of *the rich*, but to the sons of the poor, who are now, except by the merest accident in the world, as completely excluded from them as are the hares and pheasants, which, whenever they come there, come only to be eaten. These are now become great masses of property, possessed and enjoyed exclusively by the aristocracy and their dependants; and indeed such is the whole of the property of the Church. To come snivelling, therefore, and petition for *liberty to take decrees* in the Universities, without subscribing articles of religion in which the parties do not believe; to come praying to be permitted to take those degrees

without a false oath, is a thing so despicable that no man of sincerity will give it his countenance : besides which it clearly implies an approval of, or at least an *acquiescence in*, the *just domination* of the Church with regard to all the immense masses of property belonging to these Universities.

All these exclusions, however, great as the injuriousness of them is, unjust as they are towards the great body of the people, and degrading as they are in their tendency, are, all put together, a mere trifle, compared with the compulsion upon the Dissenters to give the *fruits of their estates* and the *fruits of their earnings*, for the purpose of supporting the established clergy and Church. Is there any thing that can be conceived more hostile to natural justice, than for men to be compelled to take away from the means of supporting their families a considerable part of the fruit of their labour, and to give it to men for preaching a doctrine in which they do not believe, and for performing a service in which their consciences forbid them to join ? If there be any thing more hostile to natural justice than this, I should like to have it pointed out to me. To be sure they are no longer compelled, on pain of banishment, or death, to go into the churches and call God to witness that they reverence that which they abhor ; but they are compelled to give *their money* or *their goods* in support of it ; and this indeed was all that the banishment and the hanging were intended to insure. If the church-makers of EDWARD and ELIZABETH could have obtained *security for getting money* of the Dissenters, as quietly as it is now got, they would never have had any Acts of Parliament to compel them to go to church ; they would have been as "*liberal*" as our present parsons now are ; the flocks might have roamed where they had liked, as they do now, the shepherds having taken care to secure the *fleece*.

The two great grievances of Dissenters are, the *Church-rates* and the *Tithes*. There are schemes for

quieting them as to the former ; but what schemes are these ? None of us ought to pay any *church-rates*.

The churches were kept in repair out of the clerical revenues of the parish. A third part of the *tithes* was allotted to the support of the *edifice of the church* and to the furnishing of the altar ; and if the present clergy have the *tithes* by *right of prescription*, does not this *duty* come down to them too, in the same way ? However, this pretended prescription is all nonsense. We know that the parsons and the aristocracy have the *tithes* ; we know that out of those tithes they ought to keep up the churches ; but we also know that they raise the means of doing this by an annual tax on the land and the houses of *all persons*, Dissenters as well as others.

This is so manifestly unjust towards the Dissenters, who build and maintain places of worship for themselves, *at their own cost*, that it is a grievance of which they loudly complain ; and at last, schemes of *redress* have been proposed. To excuse a man from this annual tax, upon the grounds of *his being a Dissenter*, would be to put an end to the tax at once ; for there is no test, or law, by which a Dissenter is known ; and every man would declare himself a Dissenter, the moment he was asked for the tax. The scheme of Lord ALTHORP was, to abolish the tax entirely ; and to pay the church-rates out of the *consolidated fund* ; and some scheme of this sort still appears to be entertained. A beautiful scheme this would be ; a most delightful redress of a grievance ! The tax would then fall upon the Dissenters far more heavily than it does now ; for nine-tenths of the taxes, which make up the consolidated fund, are paid by the *industrious classes*. The Dissenters compose a great part of those industrious classes ; the tax now falls principally upon the owners and occupiers of land, who would thus, according to the course which they have been pursuing for three hundred years, and which is so very conspi-

cuous in the monstrous partiality in the stamp duties, shift the burden from their own shoulders and throw it upon the shoulders of industry ; and the common day-labouring man or the artizan, if frequenting the Church, who is now shut cut to sit in the aisles of that Church, while the rich are seated in the pews, would have to pay Church-rates in the enormous taxes which he pays on all the necessities of life. This monstrous scheme was, therefore, rejected by the Dissenters, as well it might ; and there is no other mode of redress of this grievance, except that of compelling the *owners of the tithes* to keep the Churches in repair ; and this, by the *Canon Law*, that is to say, the laws of the Church, which laws they avail themselves of upon all occasions, the tithes-owners are compelled to do unto this day. But this law is become "*obsolete*," I suppose, as all the rest of the laws are, which impose *duties* on the tithe-owners of this Church ; and "*obsolete*" they will remain, until the people shall chose a Parliament, such as, I am afraid, we have very little hope of seeing at present.

But the *tithes* themselves are the great grievance after all. We have seen how this Church and the aristocracy came into possession of them ; we have seen that neither has any right of prescription to plead ; we have seen the Acts of Parliament by which they appropriated them ; and have seen that the Dissenters never acknowledged the justice or the right of appropriation ; but were compelled to render them by Acts of Parliament, which exposed them to banishment, or death, in case of refusal to yield them.

Upon what ground is it, then, that Dissenters, at any rate, are still called upon to render tithes ? Upon the ground of Acts of Parliament, I know very well ; but this present Parliament has the power to pass Acts also ; and, therefore, it is a mere question of justice and of expediency which we have to discuss. If it be unjust to make Dissenters pay Church-rates, the

injustice is much greater, because the burden is much greater, to make them pay tithes. It would be perfectly just in the Parliament to abolish tithes altogether; and this will be done in some way or other, before it be long; but with regard to Dissenters, it is so manifestly unjust to compel them to render tithes, that the thought is not to be entertained without some degree of horror. Yet they are so compelled; and to pay personal tithes, too, such as *Easter-offerings*. Many persons, having refused to pay *oblations, obventions, and offerings*, have been imprisoned for great lengths of time, and are so imprisoned unto this day. It is only about two years since one parson, sitting as a magistrate, imprisoned a man in Yorkshire for not paying tithes on the amount of his *labour*; that is to say, paying tithes on his *weekly and yearly wages*, as a labourer! So that this is no empty sound; it is a reality; it arises out of Acts of Parliament (Statute 2 and 3 EDWARD the Sixth) by which this new Church was made.

Monstrous as this is with regard to the people in general, how much more monstrous is it with regard to Dissenters! At last, however, this great and bare-faced abuse of tithes is become a subject of complaint so general, so loud, so menacing, that the owners of them see that it is impossible for them to hold them under their *present name and form*. We shall by and by see, in a future letter, into whose pockets they go; we shall see quite enough instances of half-a-dozen benefices in the hands of one man; we shall by and by see whether they are applied for the purpose of "*giving religious instruction*"; but, in the meanwhile, the aristocracy and their parsons perceive that they cannot much longer retain the exclusive possession of this immense mass of wealth, unless they can, somehow or other, retain it under a name and form other than those which it now bears, and under which name and form the thing has become so odious to the people, and

so detested by them. Therefore, a scheme is on foot to make, by Act of Parliament, what is termed a “*commutation* of tithes.” A commutation means a changing of one thing for another; and this scheme is to abolish the tithes, and to impose a money-payment in their stead.

How this is to be done, in any manner whatever, it is very difficult to imagine; but one thing is certain, that if the Parliament have the rightful power to do this, it has the rightful power to abolish the tithes, without substituting any money-payment in their stead: that much is certain; and that is what will be done at last, in spite of all the efforts of the aristocracy and the clergy to prevent it.

Who is to ascertain what the tithes of a farm will be worth, for any number of years to come? What rightful power can any Parliament have to make a man so use his farm as to make the tithes of it always of the present value? What rightful power can a Parliament have to compel a man not to lay his ground down into pasture? What rightful power to compel him to pay the same sum in tithes, whether he have crop or no crop? What rightful power to change a claim on the *increase* recoverable by one class of laws into a claim on the *soil itself* recoverable by another class of laws? Talk of the sacredness of property, indeed! What property has any man, even in an estate descended from his ancestors for hundreds of years, if the Parliament have the power to load it with a *rent-charge*, instead of the yielding of a portion of the increase arising out of the land; and that, too, dependent for its amount on his own mode of cultivation, and on the seasons? Talk of the sacredness of property, indeed; and at the same time allow that the Parliament has the power to impose a rent-charge on every inch of land in the kingdom; to give the aristocratical tithe-owners and the parsons *a lien in fee* on every man's estate, however large or small, and subject

him to the chances of having his land seized and sold away from heirs as well as present possessors, by the parson or tithe-owner ! Bad enough to compel men to yield a tenth of the increase ; but a great deal worse to make them acknowledge a perpetual rent-charge to the amount of a fourth or fifth part of the estate ; yet this is what is meant by a “*commutation of tithes.*”

It will be curious, however, to see what is to become of the *personal* tithes : what is to become of the *oblations*, and *obventions*, and *offerings* ; what is to become of the tithes payable on a man’s labour, or on the existence of his body ! Are these to be *commuted* too ; and is a man to contract for giving a parson so much a year for being alive, and so much a year for the fruit of his labour ? In the case of tithes on mills, is the mill still to pay the rent-charge, though burnt to the ground, or swept away by the floods ? How are you to commute the tithes on market-tolls ? How commute the tithes of the cottage-gardens, and of the apples in their little orchards, and of their geese, and the eggs of their hens ? How commute the tithes of a dairy-farm, when the farm may cease to be a dairy-farm any day ? Here are all these absurdities to encounter ; new and hitherto unperceived discontents to contend against ; innumerable acts of injustice unavoidable ; whole estates actually made over to the tithe-owners in cases of hop-gardens and orchards, especially the former. In short, the confusion, the inevitable outrageous injustice, produced by this, is not to be described by the pen or tongue of man.

And if it were possible, which it is not, to make Church people submit quietly to it, would the *Dissenters* be such fools as to give their consent to a measure which would render this monstrous tax, and, to them, badge of degrading servitude, permanent as the land itself ? Their industry, their great proficiency in the sciences, their exemplary sobriety, their perseverance in business, their great probity as to all pecuniary

matters, and matters of trade ; these have given them the possession, the rightful and well-merited possession of a very considerable part of the property of this whole kingdom ; and at these possessions they have come, in spite of two hundred years of persecution ; two hundred years of the contrivances of this Established Church ; two hundred years of exclusions, privations, degradations, and bodily punishments, as well as ruinous pecuniary punishments. Struggling along for two hundred years, against all the powers of the state to depress them ; amidst the terrors of ecclesiastical censures ; of bonds, of strife, of banishment, of death ; amidst all these, they have struggled along to their present possessions. If they do not merit their possessions, in this whole world there is nobody that does.

And if this “ Commutation of Tithes ” were to take place, this perpetual rent-charge, instead of a yielding of a portion of the increase, what would be the situation of a Dissenter, whose industry had given him a landed estate ? He now, from his dislike of the Church doctrine, ritual, and discipline, contributes towards the maintenance of his own Church and his own minister. He naturally, and most reasonably and justly, grudges the yielding of a tenth of the increase of his land ; but he has the means of mitigating the burden, by using the land in such a way as to make it as small as possible. Let this commutation come, and it fixes him with a rent-charge *for ever* ; takes from him, and the owners after him, *a fifth part of the property in his estate* ; places him in the situation of a *mortgager* ; gives him a co-partner in the possession of his estate ; and in some cases (and there are many of them), when a lord, or other great man, is the owner of appropriations, he will be as a mortgagee to all the landowners of a whole district of country.

It is impossible that Dissenters can submit to this, except in the way of yielding to *downright force* ; and

yet something must be done to remove this intolerable grievance of tithes. *That something* will be at last, and it would be wise to let it be at first, a complete and total abolition of tithes; a complete and total taking of them away from the Established Church; and letting that Church rest, as other Christian Churches do, upon its own intrinsic merits, and upon the voluntary support of the people who like it; the good effects of which I shall have hereafter to describe; concluding this present letter with expressing a hope that I have clearly proved that the domination of the Established Church over the Dissenters has no other foundation than that which was created by Acts of Parliament; and that those Acts of Parliament were founded in injustice and enforced by the most barbarous means.

LETTER IV.

DOES THE ESTABLISHMENT CONDUCE TO RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION ?

Parsons,

No: flatly no: if "religious instruction" mean a teaching of the people the principles and practice of a pious worshipping of GOD, as their Maker, their Preserver, and as a Being to whom they are to be answerable for all their actions in this world: flatly no!

When the Dissenters object to the union of Church and State, and insist that the teachers of religion ought to be supported by the *voluntary* offerings or contributions of those who choose to have them, the answer which they receive from both the political factions is, that "it is the *bounden duty* of every state or government to provide, *by law*, religious instruction

for the people who live under it." Nothing can be more false than this ; nothing more at variance with the precepts and practice of Christ and his Apostles. They never called upon the State for its support, or for its aid in any way : they taught that the priest was to live *by the altar* ; that is to say, by the *voluntary* offerings of those who came to the altar ; they set up no claim to any tax upon the *land*, or upon *houses*, or upon *people's labour* ; on all which a claim to a heavy tax is set up, and enforced, by our Established Church.

For many, many ages, Christians, in no part of the world, knew anything of *compulsory* payments to any priesthood ; and until 1215 the Church of ROME never pretended that any tithes were demandable by *common right* ; and it was a long time before there was any *law*, in any part of this country, to force people to yield tithes of any kind to anybody. And yet Christianity spread itself all over Europe, and churches and cathedrals rose up without any compulsory payments ; just as Dissenting meeting-houses and Catholic chapels now rise up, to hold the millions who flee from, or turn their backs on, the Established Church. When the Roman Catholic Church had recourse to the aid of the State to produce *compulsory payments to it*, it began to decline in the estimation of the people. It grew *rich*, it became *luxurious*, it became *grand* and *splendid*, and the attachment of the people to it became *feeble* in the same proportion ; till at last an attempt to raise money by a *sale of indulgences*, in order to apply that money to the building of *St. Peter's church at Rome* ; in order to erect this piece of ostentation and pride ; till at last this attempt, this audaciously profligate use of the power of the Pope, produced that open opposition which led to the *protest* against his authority ; and hence came *Protestants* and the *Protestant* religion.

It is false, then, to say, that it is the duty of a State or Government to provide, by law, for the *religious*

instruction of the people. The principles and practice of Christ and His Apostles contradict this assertion, which is also contradicted by the practice of all Christendom for twelve hundred years. But it is said that, though every man have the Bible in his hands, there would be an endless variety of faiths if every man were to be his own interpreter, and if there were no arbiter. An illustration of the absurdity of this has been sought in the case of the common and statute law; and it has been said, what would be the situation of property and of life, if there were *no judge* to determine the meaning of the law, and to compel the parties to submit to his interpretation? This is very naked sophistry; because, if there were no interpreter of the laws, no arbiter, by whose decision men were to be bound, men would do injustice and great injury to one another; every man would interpret in his own favour and to the injury of his neighbour; but in the other case, it is a matter *between man and his Maker*; no injury can arise to any other person from my wrong interpretation of the Scriptures, considered as the foundation of my belief, and as the ground of my worship; and there is no more necessity, for the good of society, that I should believe the meaning of the first chapter of St. JOHN to establish the doctrine of the Trinity, than that I should believe the contrary. It may be very *desirable* that the people of a country should be all of one faith, and all frequent the same places of worship; but it never can be desirable that the whole of a people should be heavily burdened to support the priests of one particular sect, from whose teaching nine-tenths of that people dissent; there can exist a rightful power nowhere to uphold by force, by jails, by stripes, by prisons, by halters, a state of things like this.

But, as to "*religious instruction.*" Let us see a little what this Established Church *does* in this way. It is very well known to everybody that ever heard of the matter at all, that the greatest of all the objections

to the Roman Catholic religion, was its *oral confessions* and its *absolutions*, given by the priests. This is very well known. Now then, what does this Church teach? Why, both these, in principle and in practice. In the "*Visitation of the Sick*" it is ordered by the Rubrick, that the priest shall go to the sick person, who is to be moved by the priest to make a *special confession of his sins*, after which the priest is to *absolve him* after this sort: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to "his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent "and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee; "and by his authority, committed to me, I *absolve thee from all thy sins.*" Here is "*oral confession,*" here is "*absolution,*" as complete as ever was heard of in the Church of Rome. It is well known that the Protestant Dissenters, from the very first, held this in abhorrence; and it is equally notorious that, during a hundred years, they were, by this Established Church, or at its instigation, exposed to banishment for life, or to death upon the gallows, for not going to the church and professing their belief, that this confession and absolution were agreeable to the will of God. Supposing, therefore, the Church to be efficient for its intended purposes, is this to be called "*religious instruction;*" and is there even one single churchman in the whole kingdom who will declare, that he believes that any bishop or parson has authority from *Christ to absolve him of his sins?* Not one single man, with the exception of the parsons and their kindred, and perhaps their patrons, will say that he believes this. Here, then, is a part of the *religious instruction*, which it is the alleged duty of the State to provide for us, and for which that State makes us pay sums so enormous, and for not paying towards the support of which, as tithes upon the fruit of labouring men's labour, even day-labouring men are liable by the law to be sent to jail, and sometimes are sent to jail. Let it be observed, that this confession and absolution are provided for *by act of parliament;*

that they proceed from *the law*, and do not arise from the taste or caprice of any man.

One part of “religious instruction,” and a great part of it, is the *teaching of children*; and this is provided for by the law; and pray observe, that it is provided for by the law, which orders, that in every parish the officiating minister shall, upon Sundays and holidays, after the reading of the second lesson, openly in the church, instruct and examine the children of his parish on some part at least of the Catechism; and that the fathers, mothers, masters, and dames, shall come with their children, servants, and apprentices, to hear the examination, and to receive the orders of the minister with regard to the instruction of the children. Now I will pledge my life, that there is not one man out of every fifty thousand in ENGLAND and WALES now alive, who ever heard that there was any such law as this. This would be something like “*religious instruction* ;” but it does not exist: if it do, I should like to see the man that ever saw an instance of it. If anywhere practised once or twice in the year, it is such a rarity, so small an exception, as not to be worth naming; though a thing so positively enjoined by law; and by that law, too, which made this Church, and on which this Church professes to stand.

But the great test of all is the ceremony of the *Communion*. It is this ceremony, it is taking of the sacrament according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church, which is the *real test of belonging to, or being a member of, the Church*. Now the law is very positive in this respect. It orders, “ that *every parishioner* shall *communicate*, at the least, three times in the year, “ of which Easter is to be one;” and I remember that the churchwarden of the parish of BOTLEY showed me a printed paper, which he had to fill up to carry to the visitation, in which was this question for him to answer: “ Do your parishioners regularly communicate, “ according to the law?” When I asked him what

answer he gave to that question, he said, “*None at all;*” and, indeed, I saw that he answered none of the questions, but wrote at the bottom of the paper, “*All's well.*” I lived in that parish fifteen years. The benefice was worth about five or six hundred a year; I never even heard of but two persons that went to the Communion; I have attended the church on Sundays, many times, when there has been nobody in it but myself and two or three children, the parson, the clerk, and the parson's wife, and two or three of his children; while the Methodist meeting-house was crammed three times a day so full, as for many of the people to be standing outside of the doors; and, though this might be an extreme instance, it is notoriously pretty nearly the case all over ENGLAND and WALES.

But, what do they do with the LAW? The law positively commands that every person shall communicate at the least three times a year, of which Easter is to be one. Now, do I go too far when I say, that not one man out of one thousand ever communicated in his life, unless he be more than threescore years of age? With regard to the young people; I mean those under thirty, or thereabouts, not only do they never communicate; but my firm belief is that not one out of one thousand, under thirty years of age, in ENGLAND and WALES, has any knowledge even of the meaning of the word. Yet, if it be the duty of the State to provide religious instruction for the people; and if it have the rightful power to tax the people so enormously for the support of its religious instructors; if it have the rightful power to impose upon all the people a species of religious instruction according to its will, and according to a law of its own enacting, it is surely its duty to see that the instruction takes place; to see that the monstrous masses of money paid by the people are not paid for nothing; to see that the law is not thus set openly at defiance by people as well as by priests; or, the religious instruction having ceased, is

it not the duty of the State to cause the payments for that instruction to cease also?

But, after all, the great fact is, that the Church is *not* a religious instructor of the people. Not a twentieth part of them go to the church. As long as banishment or death compelled them to go; as long as they were stigmatized as something bad and wicked, if they did not go; so long their dislike of the Church was a sort of secret, kept to themselves. Banishment or death hung over their heads until the reign of WILLIAM the Third. The Act of that reign (before mentioned) emboldened them to open their mouths a little, and to withdraw themselves from the Church; subsequent Acts, and public opinion, made their tether still longer and longer; till, at last, they make a merit of dissenting, and laugh at that which drew from their forefathers such copious streams of tears and of blood.

The treatment of the poorer part of the people has greatly tended to their alienation from the Church, from the edifice of which they have been almost literally shut out. The poorer part of the people see the rich seated in pews, while they are compelled to stand about in the aisles, exposed to the draughts of air, and to every possible inconvenience. The monstrous abuses in London, and in other great towns, in this respect, are beyond description. Those who have not money, wherewith to purchase a seat, are treated like dogs. In the villages, indeed, it is not pushed to this extent; but even there the precepts of the Apostles are pretty completely set at defiance. Great merit is taken by those who are teaching the poorer people to read, and who are subscribing for Bibles to put into their hands. Probably very few of them, comparatively, ever read the books thus subscribed for; but those who do read are likely to tell others what they do read; and those who do read, read as follows, in the 2nd chapter of the Epistle of St. JAMES, who really seems to have been inspired with a foreknowledge of these

very days in which we live, and with the practice of this Church as established by law.

" My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place ; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool ; are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts ?"

One would almost imagine, that the Church-parsons had read this with all possible care ; and had then determined to act precisely in opposition to it ; and had then fixed upon a plan and adopted a series of regulations, the best in the world to give effect to such determination. Men, however humble in life, have some consciousness of their worth as human beings : reason ; natural reason, as well as the word of God, teach them, that all men are equal in the eyes of God, at any rate. The law tells them, that the church and the parson are appointed for the "*cure of souls* ;" that is to say, the salvation of souls. All men know, and must know, that one soul is as precious as another ; and that the soul is not more precious for being in a body covered with fine clothes. All men know this ; it is obvious to the understandings of all men. The business at Church is, the salvation of souls ; therefore this partiality, this honour paid to the rich, and degradation inflicted on the poor, is revolting to the very nature of man. No man is of so base a spirit as to like degradation : the poorer part of the people : therefore, turn their backs on the Church ; and go to those places of worship where all are upon a level. The old Roman Catholic Church was too wise to make these distinctions ; all were upon the floor, rich and poor ; for that short time, at any rate, poverty ceased

to be held in degradation. This Established Church is the only church in the world, or that ever was in the world, where the poor are, or were, treated in a manner different from the rich.

If it be the duty of the State to provide "religious instruction" for the people; and if it have a rightful power to enact a certain form of worship, and to compel the people to pay for the support of it; if it have the rightful power to compel the people to pay for a Church service in any particular form of words, it is its duty to cause the church to adhere to that form, in all and every part, according to the law. The law establishing this Church declares *matrimony* to be a "*holy* religious ceremony." It declares, that this *holy* estate of matrimony "was instituted of God, signifying "to us the mystical union, that is *betwixt Christ and his Church*; which holy estate Christ adorned with his "presence, and first miracle that he wrought, in Cana of "Galilee." Now, if this be all true, and if the Parliament have the rightful power to permit the people to be married *by the civil magistrate*, what is there that the Parliament has not the rightful power to do with regard to this Church? And, is it not evident, that this matrimony-part of the Church Establishment is virtually repealed, the moment you pass a law to authorize marriage by the civil magistrate?

There is another part of the law, which made this Church, and which appoints an order for the *Burial of the dead*. It orders this service to be performed at the burial of every person, except such as die *unbaptized*, or *excommunicate*, or have laid *violent hands upon themselves*. But, we have now a law, which virtually repeals this part of the law of the Church. This new law, passed without any opposition from the bishops; and defended by BLOMFIELD, bishop of London; authorizes those who have the custody of those unfortunate poor, who have no relations or others to pay for their Christian burial, to *dispose* of the bodies

of the said unfortunate poor, to be taken away, and *to be cut to pieces by surgeons*; and, of course, to be placed beyond the possibility of Christian burial according to the law on which this Church stands. Now, either this service of the "*burial of the dead*" is of some use in the way of "*religious instruction*," or it is not. If it be not of any use, why are we to suppose that any other of the services, appointed by the same law, are of any use? If it be of no use, what are we to think of the charges for *consecrating* burying-grounds; what are we to think of the dues exacted by the clergy for performing the burial-service; which dues, observe, are of immense amount in the course of a year. If it be of some use; if it do form a part of "*religious instruction*"; if it do conduce to religious feelings, by the great attention it bestows upon the bodies of the dead; what are we to think of that Church whose bishops assented, in person, and whose clergy all tacitly assented, to the depriving of the most unfortunate of the poor of this last trifling mark of attention towards their remains?

And after all this, are we to wonder that the people turn their backs on the established Church? Are we to wonder that it is become useless with regard to them? Are we to wonder at anything relating to the matter, except at the impudence of those who pretend to regard this establishment as something conducing to religious instruction?

I noticed in the beginning of this letter, that the Roman Catholic Church ceased to be beloved by the people in the exact proportion that it obtained protection from the State; but there wanted a *modem* instance for the illustration of this principle; and that instance we have most complete in the United States of AMERICA; a country, the bare pronouncing of the name of which frightens every unjust devourer of tithes and of taxes half to death. The excellent government of that country; the wise, the cheap, the just government of that country, knows nothing of one religion

more than of another. In that country religious sects, religion itself, are wholly unknown to the laws. As connected with religion, the laws of the country know nothing of any man, and of course there is no *compulsion* on any man to pay one farthing to any body for religious instruction. Yet it is agreed on all hands, it will be denied by nobody, that the people of the United States are *better instructed in religion* than any other people in the world ; and it is curious too, that TOM CRANMER's Prayer-Book religion is in that country in a very flourishing state (with some parts of the Prayer Book expunged), and that the bishops and parsons of that church are as much respected and beloved as other religious teachers generally are ; and this too, precisely because the religion *is not established by law*

One reason for supporting this establishment is, that if it were destroyed the people would be split up into sects. What ! *more* than they are now ? Why should they be split up more than they are now ? Having got out of danger of banishment and the halter, they now follow their own fancy in this respect ; each man acts according to the dictates of his conscience ; and what could he do more if the Church were broken up.

Oh no ! This thing is not wanted for "*religious instruction* ;" it is not wanted for the teaching of the people, or the saving of their souls, but for quite other purposes, of which other purposes we shall see enough in the next letter, when we come to look at the present *actual state of this establishment*, the bare sight of which ought to make its defenders drop down dead with shame. We shall then see a little more as to the natural effect on the people of the existence of this Church, and of the conduct of its clergy ; but we have here seen quite enough to convince any reasonable man, any man of common understanding and common justice, that it is a gross falsehood to pretend that this establishment ought to be regarded as a thing necessary to the "*religious instruction*" of the people.

LETTER V.

WHAT IS THE PRESENT STATE OF THE CHURCH
ESTABLISHMENT ? AND IS IT POSSIBLE
TO REFORM IT ?

Parsons,

The answer to the first of these questions will go pretty nearly to answer the second ; because, though no human being can describe the present state of this Church in its true colours ; though the Church in its present state is so contrary to natural justice, so outrageously insulting to the reason and common sense of the nation, that neither pen nor tongue can furnish an adequate description of it ; still that which I shall be able to state will be enough to show to every man of sense and reflection, that this establishment admits of no reform ; and that, as it arose out of Acts of Parliament, so it ought to be put an end to by Acts of Parliament.

I shall consider the state of the Church under two heads : its *revenues* ; and the *performance of its duties* : and I must beseech the reader's attention not only to the *facts* that I have to state ; but to the *proofs* which I produce of the truth of those facts, moving, as I shall, not one single step without undoubted proof of every single fact.

With regard to the revenues of the Church, they consist, in the first place, of tithes ; and these are *personal*, *predial*, and *mixed*. Personal tithes consist of what are called *oblations*, *obventions*, and *offerings* ; and these are commanded to be paid by the Act 2nd and 3rd EDWARD the Sixth, chapter 13. These tithes arise from the profit of the *personal labour* of a man, in the exercise of any art, trade, or employment.

They are exacted to this day. I have paid *Easter offerings* all my life-time; and the sum collected in this way, in the great towns, is perfectly enormous. Within my recollection, many men have been put into jail, and kept there for a long time, for refusing to make these payments, they being *Dissenters*, and the payments being contrary to their consciences. But upon this head we have a parliamentary document, printed by order of the House of Commons, in 1833, showing the extent to which the parsons push this species of demand. This document was laid before the House in the month of August 1833. It showed that FRANCIS LUNDY, rector of LOCKINGTON, in the East Riding of the county of YORK, charged with tithes the following working men of his parish :

	Sums					
	Wages.		demanded.			
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Jeremiah Dodsworth for last year.....	13	0	0	0	4	4
Ditto, this year, hired weekly.....	15	0	0	0	5	0
William Hall.....	10	10	0	0	3	6
Harrison Moment	9	0	0	0	3	0
Henry Blakeston	15	0	0	0	5	0
William Foster	8	0	0	0	2	8
George Fenby.....	6	6	0	0	2	0
John Hall, half a year	10	10	0	0	3	6
John Milner	15	0	0	0	5	0
Matthew Blakeston	8	8	0	0	2	8
Carling Risim.....	16	0	0	0	5	4
John Dodsworth.....	15	0	0	0	5	0
Wm. Fallowfield, miller, servant.....	18	0	0	0	6	0
Robt. Braithwaite, do., promised to compound, but now refuseth	15	0	0	0	5	0

JEREMIAH DODSWORTH refused to pay. He was summoned before two magistrates, JOHN BLANCHARD, a parson, and ROBERT WYLIE, who sentenced him to pay the four shillings and fourpence, and the costs and charges of the prosecution. He still refusing to pay, the same two magistrates issued a *warrant of distress against his goods and chattels*. He having no goods and chattels, JOHN BLANCHARD, the parson,

as magistrate, committed him to the *House of Correction at Beverley*, there to be kept for the space of three calendar months, as punishment for not paying his tithes. Now, observe, the Act before-mentioned of the 2nd and 3rd of EDWARD the Sixth, chapter 13, exempts from payment of personal tithes, *day-labouring men*, and JEREMIAH DODSWOTRH was a day-labouring man. The law has long laid it down that no personal tithes are due from servants in husbandry; because, by their labour, things are produced which pay tithes. But now, you will say, how came *justices of the peace* to have anything to do with this matter? Tithes were an affair known only to the ecclesiastical courts; but the parsons wanted a *swifter* way to come at poor men. They, therefore, procured to be passed, in the 7th and 8th WILLIAM the Third, "An Act for the *more easy recovery of small tithes.*" This Act, which was first passed for three years, and afterwards made perpetual, by the 3rd of ANNE, chapter 18, made provision that two justices of the peace might issue their warrant of distress against a person refusing to pay tithes. This Act extended to all tithes under the value of forty shillings; and this Act took care to make no exceptions with regard to *day-labourers* and *servants in husbandry*. It enacted, that "*all and every person or persons*" should pay offerings, oblations, and obventions. Thus was the Act of EDWARD, with regard to *day-labourers*, and *servants in husbandry*, set aside; and the tithe-claimers were let loose upon the whole of the community with their two justices of the peace to issue distrainments on goods and chattels.

But (and I beg my readers to mark it well) this Act did not go to the length of *sending to jail* persons who had no goods and chattels! That was reserved for the "*enlightened nineteenth century?*" and for the "*beneficent reign,*" as Sir ROBERT PEEL called it, of the great big "*Sovereign,*" so famed for his

exploits on VIRGINIA WATER. In the fifth year of his "glorious reign," an Act was passed (5 Geo. IV. chapter 18) to authorize magistrates to send men to jail, in cases where they had nothing to distrain upon. Under this Act it was that this JOHN BLANCHARD, the parson, by his single authority and warrant, committed JEREMIAH DODSWORTH to jail for three months, for not paying to his brother parson, FRANCIS LUNDY, four shillings and fourpence for offerings, oblations, and obventions ! This, then, is the law ! Is this law to continue ? Will Sir ROBERT PEEL's Church reform suffer this law to continue ? If he does not suffer it to continue, he must abolish these tithes ; and if he can abolish these tithes, why not abolish other tithes ? I leave this for Sir ROBERT PEEL to reflect upon ; just observing of LUNDY and BLANCHARD, that they were both *pluralists* !

So much for personal tithes. Next comes the tithe on mills, which is a sort of personal tithe also. The next class is, the *predial tithes*, as of corn, hay, wood, hemp, hops, and all kinds of fruit, seeds, and herbs. The tithes on pasturage, commonly called *agistment* tithes ; tithes on milk, on all young animals, on eggs, on young fowls, on young birds (except game). Tithes are payable on acorns ; everything that grows in a garden. The mast of beech pays tithes ; rabbits in a warren are titheable ; pigeons are titheable ; but deer are not ! Deer, hares, pheasants, and partridges, are not titheable, because they are "wild animals," though the high-blooded nobility of ENGLAND now breed them for sale, and sell them. My God ! how impudent, as well as unjust, are these things !

Thus we see how large a portion of all the produce, even of our very labour, is taken from us by this Church. Besides the tithes, this Church has all the immense property attached to the Universities and their colleges ; all the immense mass of property attached to the great schools ; estates without number

and without bounds ; all belonging to the whole of the people at large, and all swallowed up by a handful of the aristocracy, their relations and dependants. For all this property a *great deal ought to be done for the people*; and is it not curious that, while the amount of this revenue, not so little in ENGLAND and WALES as six millions a year ; is it not curious ; is it not offensive to one's feelings ; is it not an insult to call us an enlightened people, and to brag about the light of the nineteenth century ; to have the audacity to accuse our forefathers of *tameness* and of *ignorance* ; and to issue a Royal Commission at the same time, consisting of bishops, archbishops, and the prime minister, “*to devise the means of providing for the cure of souls* ;” that is to say, to devise the means of causing this revenue to be given to men who will *reside in the parishes, and teach the people the Church religion.*

I now come to speak of the performance of the duties of this Church, having first to observe, however, that with regard to the *whole amount of its revenue* of all sorts, special care has been taken to give us no official account of what that amount is. Return upon return have been made by the bishops ; but always keeping this important fact out of sight. They have always been forward to tell us how many *small livings* there are, and what is the amount of the revenue of each of these ; but never have they told us how many great livings there are, and what is the amount of each of them ; nor have they ever told us how the small livings came to be small, when we well know, that at the Reformation, they were all so settled as for none to be too small : we must, therefore, by-and-by, hunt out the cause of their being small as well as we can.

With regard to the performance of the duties of the Church, every man, when he enters into holy orders, makes a positive declaration before God at the altar, in the presence of the bishop, that “he verily believes “that he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take

"upon him this office and administration, *to serve God for the promoting of His glory, and the edifying of His people*, that he is determined, with the "Scriptures, to *instruct the people committed to his charge*; that he will give his *faithful diligence* always "so to minister the doctrine and sacraments, and the "discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, "and as this realm hath received the same according "to the commandment of God; that he will *teach the people committed to his cure and charge, with all diligence* to keep and observe the same; that he will "be ready with all *faithful diligence* to banish and "drive away all *erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's word*; and to use public and private "admonitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as "to the whole, within his cure, as need shall require "and occasion be given; that he will be *diligent in the prayers and in the reading of the Holy Scriptures*, "and in such studies as help to the same, *laying aside the study of the world and the flesh*: that he will be "diligent to frame and fashion himself and his family "according to the doctrine of Christ, that he may be "a *wholesome example and spectacle to the flock of Christ*; and that he will maintain and set forward "quietness, peace, and love among all Christians, but "especially among them that are or shall be committed to his charge:" having made these declarations and promises, he solemnly ratifies and confirms them *by receiving the holy communion!*

Besides this the *vicars* (and about one-third of the benefices are vicarages) were, before the passing of the Act of the 43rd of GEO. III. chapter 84 (of which Act I shall have to say a great deal by-and-by), compelled to *take an oath* on the Evangelists, that they would be *constantly resident with their flocks*. This oath was not deemed necessary in the case of a rector; but the vicar being an inferior person, it was thought necessary to bind him to *an oath*, over and above the

bindings of his solemn declaration on taking orders. Yet, in the face of these solemn vows, in the face of the declaration that each man of them *believed himself moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him the cure of souls*; in defiance of the solemn ratification of their declarations and promises by receiving the holy communion; despite of all these, a return made by the bishops to the king in council, in 1811, and communicated by the king in council to the parliament, there were, when that return was made, *ten thousand four hundred and twenty-one benefices*; and of those benefices *five thousand three hundred and ninety-seven of the incumbents were resident on their benefices*, and *five thousand and twenty-four were not resident on their benefices*; and of course were not fulfilling their vows made at their ordination!

But we now come to a memorable epoch and transaction in the history of this Church; namely, the Act of Parliament of 1803, 43rd of GEORGE the Third, chapter 84. The reader should be informed, that during the late "*glorious*" war against the republicans of FRANCE, a total change took place with regard to the conduct of the clergy of this Church. The French, broken loose from the fangs of their tyrants, had committed deeds which filled all the world, and particularly the English people, with horror. They had put down their Church, and all its trappings and its tithes. They had almost proclaimed themselves *Atheists*. The English parsons, not only for their own security but for their aggrandizement, as they thought, took advantage of these things; they represented all *Dissenters* generally, and every man who dared to utter a word by way of complaint against tithes, or against the Church, as a *friend of the French atheists*; as a *jacobin*, a *leveller*, a *revolutionist*, and a *rebel* in his heart. They succeeded: and during that war innumerable persons were punished by heavy fines and imprisonment, for mere inuendos; for merely hinting, with regard to the

clergy and the Church, only a hundredth part of what is now explicitly declared against them in every newspaper in the kingdom.

In this state of things, nineteen-twentieths of the nation blinded and deluded, and the other twentieth silenced by the fear of pecuniary ruin, or a jail, the clergy set the laws of residence openly at defiance, bid defiance to their parishioners in this respect. And now be pleased, reader, to pay great attention to what these laws of residence were. The Act of 21 HENRY VIII. chapter 13, provided for the residence of incumbents. This Act has the following preamble: "For the more quiet and virtuous increase and maintenance of divine worship, the preaching and teaching the Word of God, with godly and good example given, the better discharge of curates, the maintenance of hospitality, *the relief of poor people*, the increase of devotion, and good opinion of laymen toward the spiritual persons." The Act was entitled, "Spiritual persons abridged from having pluralities of livings, and from the taking of farms." There was a heavy penalty imposed by this Act against parsons who shall procure more than one benefice; any one who should be absent from his living and his parsonage-house; any one who should farm, except merely for provision for himself and his household; any parson who shall buy any thing to sell again, whether merchandise, corn, or cattle, or any other thing; any parson who should offend in any of these respects was made liable to an information *qui tam*; the one-half of the forfeiture to go to the king, and the other half to the informer, "suing for the same in the king's courts." There were divers exceptions with regard to chaplains of the king, of the bishops, and of the great nobility; and in these excepted cases the clergyman might have *two* benefices; but as to the general mass of the parochial clergy the Act was express, and even towards the clergy of the

cathedrals. This clause of the Act expressly says that "Every archdeacon, dean, prebendary, parson, or vicar, shall be personally resident and abiding in, at, and upon, his said dignity prebend, or benefice" (or at one of them in the exceptions, where he was allowed to have two); and "in case of such spiritual person not keeping residence, but absenting himself wilfully by the space of one month together, or by the space of two months, to be accounted at several times in any one year, and make his residence and abiding in any other place by such time, that then he shall forfeit for every such default ten pounds sterling; the one-half thereof to the king our sovereign lord, and the other half thereof to the party that will sue for the same in any of the king's courts by original writ, debt, bill, plaint, or information; in which action and suit the defendant shall not wage his law, nor have essoin or protection allowed."

Now, this was the law, descending down from the Roman Catholic Church, and never repealed nor infringed on. And what could be more reasonable than this? There was another Act, passed after the country became Protestant; namely, 13 ELIZABETH, chapter 20, providing that no lease of any benefice should endure longer than the incumbent *should be resident in his parish*; and that if any one offend against this Act he was to forfeit a year's profit of his benefice. And now we come to the *grand blow* of the Church. I have described before, the state of arrogance and insolence at which the clergy had arrived during the French war; I have described the pitch of total disregard of the people, at which they had arrived, in spite of the existence of these laws, which enabled anybody, and particularly their parishioners, to inform against them for absenting themselves from their duty. If their *raves* and their *oaths* passed for nothing with them, here was the positive, unequivocal letter of the law; and recollect, that ten pounds

sterling, at the time when the law passed, was equal to two hundred pounds sterling in the middle of the French war. In this state of things, however, with the people nineteen-twentieths blinded and frightened, and the other twentieth not daring to open their lips, *who was to enforce the law?* Where was to be found a man who dared to lay an information against a parson for trafficking, or for being absent from his living? At last there was such a man found; and in 1799, and 1800, a Mr. WILLIAMS, who had been secretary to one of the bishops, laid informations against hundreds of the clergy; and had the informations in the Court of King's Bench; some of them carried on to the stage of *conviction*.

Well, this reminded the defaulters of the law, to be sure, and of their duty? There was no remedy but to pay the penalties, and the penalties were enormous, notwithstanding the change in the value of money; for scores of the parsons, in spite of their vows and their oaths, had been absent from their livings, or had been farming and trafficking, for years. However, there was no remedy: law was positive, express, and plain; and no *ex-post facto* law could be passed without a violation of the constitution. Now hear it; not oh Heavens! or oh earth! but oh injured and insulted people of ENGLAND! hear what I am about to say. In the year 1801, soon after the bringing of the actions aforementioned, the Parliament which WELLINGTON said was the best possible Parliament, passed an Act (41st Geo. III. chapter 102) to compel the Court of King's Bench to stay the proceedings in the aforementioned actions, till the 25th of March, 1802. Before the 25th of March came, the same Parliament passed another Act (42nd GEO. III. chapter 30) to stay the proceedings in those actions still further, until the 25th day of July, in that same year, 1802. Before July came it passed another Act (42nd GEO. III. chapter 86) to stay the proceedings under the

Act of HENRY the Eighth, and also under the Act of ELIZABETH, until the 8th day of April, 1803. Thns, by these Acts of Parliament, clearly *ex post facto*; clearly in violation of the express written law; clearly taking from the informer his property, and holding it in abeyance; thus by this *ex post facto* law, the parsons were protected in their delinquencies for two whole years, and the informer subject to the amount of his costs, and exposed to ruin, having the cry of Atheist and Jacobin set up against him, because he obeyed the law in endeavouring to punish these parsons for having neglected their duty and broken their vows and their oaths! But we have only seen the beginning of this memorable transaction. There is the end to come yet. The actions having been suspended until April 1803, this suspending work was brought to a close by the Act of 43 GEO. III. chapter 84, which Act *laid the foundation of the total overthrow of the Church*, though it was passed at the clamorous instigation of the parsons themselves. It enacted that every spiritual person, who before that Act had incurred pecuniary penalties for non-residence, or farming, *should be freed and discharged from the same*; that all the actions already commenced should be *rendered null*; that, where convictions had taken place, the informers should receive no more than ten pounds, be the amount of the penalty what it might; and that, as for the other actions where convictions had not taken place, they *should cease and have no effect*; and that such actions should be dismissed or discontinued by order of the Court, *without payment of costs!* This glorious Act then went on to repeal and annul all the informations *qui tam*; to authorize parsons to be farmers, and to buy and sell corn and cattle; to authorize bishops to give license to what parsons they liked, to farm, to be absent from their livings; and in short to do what they chose to permit them to do contrary to the character of clergymen.

This Act was brought in by Sir WILLIAM SCOTT, *who was then Member for the University of Oxford*; and it passed, without the smallest opposition, on the 7th of July, 1803. It did not expressly exonerate the clergy from the *vows* and *promises* made at their ordination: but it expressly repealed the obligation on the vicars *to take the oath* of residence at their induction, as will be seen by reference to clause 37 of the Act.

It is curious that this Act was entitled, An “Act “to amend the Laws relating to Spiritual Persons “Holding of Farms, and for the *Enforcing the Residence of Spiritual Persons on their Benefices in England.*” How completely it succeeded we have seen; for, in eight years after the Act was passed, out of ten thousand four hundred and twenty-one benefices, five thousand and twenty-four were without resident incumbents, even according to the showing of the bishops themselves, who would, of course, do everything in their power to make the thing appear as little bad as possible! Hence it is that crowds of these incumbents live upon the continent of Europe; hence it is that the wealth of the parishes is withdrawn from them; hence it is that these swarms of drones come and take the honey from the hive, and carry it out of the country; and hence it is that there are, in fact, no Church-people left, except the aged, who follow their habits of fifty years ago, and those who have an interest in upholding this prodigious mass of abuse. In the meanwhile, the clergy have assumed the sword of the *magistrate*; having lost the powers of *persuasion*, they have resorted to *force*; laid down the Bible and taken up the Statute Book. They are everywhere found foremost in a rigid execution of the penal laws. They read the Communion Service, and enjoin on their congregations, by a whole string of precepts from Holy Writ, to be, above all things, *merciful and good to the poor*; and, at this very moment, we see Parson CAPPER recommending the separation

of the unfortunate poor man from his wife; and both from their children; and we see Parson LOWE in the high tide of practising upon the recommendation. Do they hear ZECHARIAH say, "Woe to the idle shepherd "that leaveth the flock?" Do they read the words of EZEKIEL? "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that "do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed "the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with "the wool, ye kill them that are fed; but ye feed not "the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, "neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither "have ye bound up that which was broken, neither "have ye brought again that which was driven away, "neither have ye sought that which was lost; but "with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. "And they were scattered, because there is no sheep-herd."

Whether they read them or not, the people read them; and it is not otherwise to put into their hands the means of reading them. However, they do read them; and they read in the two Testaments, from one end of them to the other, that which has made them make up their minds unanimously, with the exceptions before-mentioned, that this establishment ought to be *repealed*; that this immense mass of property ought no longer to be held by the aristocracy, their relations and dependants; but that, as it is the property of the whole nation, for the benefit of the whole nation it ought to be used.

We have now to see what sort of a *distribution* there is of the benefices. There are twenty-six bishoprics; twenty-six deaneries, fifty-three archdeaconries; three hundred and ninety-four prebends; there are four hundred and forty-four fellowships at Oxford, and four hundred and seven fellowships at Cambridge: there are the fellowships at Winchester College; the benefices in the schools at Eton and Westminster; the masterships of innumerable hospitals and schools and other charitable endowments; there are the master-

ships of alms-houses even, in great numbers; and all these, with the exception of the least valuable part of them, are in the hands of those who are called "the nobility," and in those of their relations and dependants.

But now, with regard to the *parochial benefices*; there are *three hundred and thirty-two* persons, who have amongst them the revenues of *fourteen hundred and ninety-six* parishes. There are *five hundred* more who have amongst them *fifteen hundred and twenty-four* parishes. There are several persons, who are either peers or the relations of peers, who have each six benefices, at the least, including their cathedral preferment. There is a G. W. ONSLOW, who is the vicar of SEND, perpetual curate of RIPLEY, vicar of SHALFORD, perpetual curate of BRAMLEY, rector of WISLEY, and vicar of PURFORD. There is a GILBERT HEATHCOTE, who is archdeacon of WINCHESTER, a fellow of WINCHESTER College, treasurer of WELLS Cathedral, vicar of ANDOVER, vicar of HURSLEY, perpetual curate of FOSCOt, and perpetual curate of OTTERBOURNE. There is Lord WALSHINGHAM, who is on the pension-list, as last printed, for £700 a year, who is Archdeacon of SURREY, a prebendary of WINCHESTER, rector of CALBOURNE, rector of FAWLEY, perpetual curate of EXBURY, and rector of MERTON. The Earl of GUILDFORD is rector of OLD ALRESFORD, rector of NEW ALRESFORD, perpetual curate of MEDSTED, rector of St. MARY, SOUTHAMPTON, including the great parish of SOUTH STONEHAM, master of St. CROSS HOSPITAL, with the revenue of the parish of St. FAITH along with it. There is a Mr. JOHN FELLOWES, rector of BRAMMERTON, rector of BRATTON CLOVELEY, vicar of EASTON NEWTON, rector of MAUTBY, rector of SHOTTISHAM St. MARTIN. There is the Honourable E. S. KEPPEL a rector in *five* parishes, and a *vicar* in two parishes. There is the Rev. WILLIAM HETT,

who is a prebendary, and a vicar choral in LINCOLN, a rector in *three* parishes, and a vicar in *two* parishes, and a perpetual curate in *two* parishes. There are three PRETTYMANS, having amongst them *fifteen* benefices. There is the Rev. F. D. PERKINS, chaplain to the king, rector of HAM, rector of SWAYFIELD, vicar of FOLESHILL, vicar of HATHERLEY-DOWN, vicar of SOW, vicar of STOKE. I will not tire the reader, but I must mention the Rev. J. T. CASBERD, who has a prebend in each of the two cathedrals of WELLS and LLANDAFF, who is a rector in *one* parish, a vicar in *four* parishes, and a perpetual curate in *two* parishes ! WELLINGTON's brother has one of the great prebends of DURHAM, he his rector of BISHOPWEARMOUTH, rector of CHELSEA, and rector of THERFIELD. These are merely instances ; so that, as the reader will see, the Parliament is going to be prettily amused with a scheme for *making provision for the cure of souls*. As to the authority upon which I state these things, I take them from a book printed by RIVINGTON of St. PAUL's church-yard, entitled the "*Clerical Guide*," and published in 1829, that being the last edition ; and it is well-known that Messrs. RIVINGTON are the *booksellers of the Established Church*, and that they have been such for fifty years.

Now, will any man pretend to say that this establishment *ought to exist as it is*? And will he pretend to say that it is possible to *reform* it by mere miserable expedients, such as are now talked of ? Why, the very suggestion of a desire to *discover* the means of providing for the cure of souls : the bare fact that the king has appointed a commission of bishops and others, to *discover the means* of making this provision ; when we see fourteen hundred and ninety-six parishes in the hands of three hundred and thirty-two men ; when we see the incumbents thus, by necessity, incapable even to go to look at their

parishes; when we see the bishop of LONDON, who is one of the commissioners to discover these means, with a relation, promoted by himself to be a prebendary of CHESTER and the rector at the same time of *two great parishes*; when we see the Archbishop of YORK (who is another of the commissioners), with one relation being a chancellor of the church of YORK, Archdeacon of CLEVELAND, rector of KIRBY, vicar of STAINTON St. WINIFRED, and rector of STOKESLEY; when we see this, what are we to believe with regard to the *real intention* of this commission?

But there is another branch of this subject, the SMALL LIVINGS, which if our indignation were still asleep, would rouse it into most turbulent action. It is hardly credible, but the facts are these, that in ENGLAND and WALES there are sixteen thousand and some odd *separate parishes* and *townships*, each having its church (where the church has not been suffered to tumble down), each having its churchwardens and overseers; and each ought to have its resident minister; but when the aristocracy had grasped the property of the church and the poor, as we have before seen, in the reign of HENRY the Eighth, they passed an act to *unite parishes*; so that two parishes became one as to the proprietorship of the tithes and offerings. This act was 37 HENRY the VIII., chapter 1. By another act which was passed 17 CHARLES the Second (chapter 3), the power of uniting parishes was *extended* still further than by the act of HENRY the Eighth. The united parishes became one living or benefice; but they still retained by law their separate capacity as to the civil parochial government. Thus the sixteen thousand parishes and townships became moulded into ten thousand four hundred and twenty-one benefices; and we have just seen how these benefices are heaped together for the aristocracy, their relations, and dependants. The

uniting or parishes was for the purpose of getting the revenues into greater heaps, to be handy for the purposes of the aristocracy, who have now the impudence to pretend to believe that the country is now more populous than it formerly was, while they have united parishes in this manner under the pretence of the people having become *less numerous!*

Now to the facts with regard to the SMALL LIVINGS. The parishes were united to make them all large enough. Yet when the last return was made by the bishops to the King in council, and that return was laid before the House of Commons, which was in 1818, the thing stood thus : There were ten thousand four hundred and twenty-one livings or benefices. Of these there were 4,361 that were called "*small livings,*" the revenue of each being under 150*l.* a year. Some of these were under ten pounds a year, and so on up to a hundred and fifty. In short, there were 4,361 benefices so small, in spite of the unions, that the average revenue of them was 84*l.* ! Monstrous fact, while there are bishops with from twenty to forty thousand pounds a year revenue; while there are deans, prebendaries, ardeacons, rectors, vicars, fellows of colleges with thousands a year each ; and observe, these small livings are exonerated from the land-tax on account of their smallness ! How then (for this is the great question) how then (for this is the question for Sir ROBERT PEEL to answer to a Parliament of sense and of spirit) ; *how, then, came there to be small livings,* when everything was so settled at the Reformation that the law (as I have above cited it) insisted imperatively on the residence, on the constant residence of every incumbent on the spot whence he derived his revenues ? Could the law contemplate a man's constant residence upon a spot, and the performance of clerical duties on a spot, the revenues of which yielded him less than ten pounds a year of our

money? That is impossible. The livings were all sufficiently great at that time, and now let us see how they came to be too small. Every living yields a sufficiency now, and more than a sufficiency. The people pay more than a sufficiency. Who then is it that takes it away from the rector, the vicar, or perpetual curate?

To be sure, the aristocracy took away a large part of the property of the Church and the poor; they took away the abbey-lands; they took away a large portion of the great tithes; but the law took care to leave enough for the due maintenance of the incumbent. The parsons are now crying out against the lay-impropriators, and if the people were to cry out against them, the cry would be just enough. But we must look at the conduct of the clergy themselves, and see what hand they have had in the producing of the small livings.

At the Reformation, when the Parliament did with all the Church-property just what it pleased, it basely took away the revenues of parishes innumerable; gave them to laymen in some cases; gave them to colleges in other cases; gave them to Church-dignitaries in other cases; gave them to deans and chapters in other cases. But in all these cases the law compelled the parties, to whom the revenues were thus given, to give a certain sum, annually, to the parson of the parish, for ever, which was called an *endowment*. Now I beg you to pay attention to what I am going to say. At that time money was of twenty times the value that it is now, as nearly as possible. The endowment was a certain fixed sum; and now mark the monstrousness of this aristocracy and aristocratical part of the clergy. The revenues are much about twenty times as great as they were at the time when the endowment was fixed. These great clergymen have received the augmented revenues to their full extent; and, they have paid the parsons in the

several parishes the bare sum of the endowment; that is to say, a twentieth part of what they ought to have paid them; and, of the 4,321 small livings, the poverty of the far greater part of them arises from this cause. Two or three instances will be better than a long essay, and a great deal better than any declamation on the subject. The parish of ALDERSHOT, in HAMPSHIRE, was given to the Master of St. Cross Hospital at WINCHESTER, reserving an endowment of fifteen pounds a year for the parson of the parish. The tithes then amounted, probably, to about thirty pounds a year in that money. They now amount to upwards of seven hundred a year. The Master of St. Cross Hospital receives the seven hundred pounds a year, and he honestly gives the parson of the parish the fifteen pounds a year. And *who* is this Master of St. Cross Hospital? It is the *Earl of Guildford!* No wonder we see such alarm at the prospect of meddling with Church property; but is this good treatment of the people of ALDERSHOT, in whose parish in defiance of the law, there is *no parsonage-house*; and how should there be, when Lord GUILDFORD leaves but fifteen pounds a year in the parish? This is an agricultural and nice productive little parish, with four hundred and ninety-four inhabitants. Take another instance in the north of HAMPSHIRE. HURSTBOURNE PRIORS, united with the parish of ST. MARYBOURNE, contains, probably, four or five thousand acres of land. The tithes of all sorts cannot be worth so little as six or seven hundred a year. Lord PORTSMOUTH's fine house and park are in one of these parishes. There are two Churches, and 1,205 inhabitants, all agricultural; some of the finest meadows, sheep-farms, and coppices, in the kingdom. These two united parishes give to the incumbent a hundred and thirty pounds a year, including an addition out of Queen ANNE'S Bounty; that is to say, out of the taxes: of which I shall say

more by-and-by. The Bishop of WINCHESTER is the patron ; and I do not ascertain from any document that I have, who it is that takes away the revenues ; but I know this, that the bishops say the parsonage-house is in “a damp and unhealthy situation,” and that no parson resides in it ; so that here are two parishes, with four or five thousand acres of fine land, with 1,205 inhabitants, paying, perhaps, a thousand a year in tithes and offerings, with two Churches, with a non-resident parson, paid partly out of the taxes, while the revenues of the parishes are taken away by the Bishop of WINCHESTER, or by some one who pays the pitiful endowment to the parson. Take another instance. The parish of BENTLEY, in the east of HAMPSHIRE, and a few miles from FARNHAM, in SURREY, has a population of 400 persons. A considerable part of the parish is fine hop-garden ; the tithes amount to from 800*l.* to 1,000*l.* a year, and the parson receives his endowment of twenty-eight pounds a year. He would receive five hundred and sixty pounds a year, if he were to be paid according to the spirit and intention of the endowment. If his endowment had been raised as the tithes went on rising, he would now have 560*l.* a year at the least. In despite of the law, there *is no parsonage-house in the parish*; and here is this productive and populous parish left without parsonage-house or parson, while the *Archdeacon of SURREY* takes away the 800*l.* or 1,000*l.* a year ! And *who is the Archdeacon of SURREY ?* It is Lord WAL-SINGHAM, who is a pensioner on the pension-list ; who has the tithes of several other parishes in this same sort of way; who is a prebendary of WINCHESTER ; and, as we have seen before, a chaplain to the King, rector of CALBOURNE, rector of FAWLEY, perpetual curate of EXBURY, and rector of MERTON, or who was all these, observe, in the year 1829, that being the latest period to which my authorities come down.

Here is enough : here is a sample of the whole ;

and hence it is, that there are 4,361 *small livings* out of the 10,420 ! And is Sir ROBERT PEEL sitting in a Commission : do not his vast acquirements and talents cry aloud against him, while he sees these things in existence, and while he is sitting in a commission, to discover the means of providing for the cure of souls in the parishes of ALDERSHOT, HURSTBOURNE, and BENTLEY ; and in all the other thousands of parishes similarly situated ? And does he believe that he can “*reform*” this Church with the assent and co-operation of the dignitaries of this same Church ? He heard Sir JAMES GRAHAM tell us, that “the tithes belonged “not to man ; that they were given to GOD.” Are they given to GOD at ALDERSHOT and at BENTLEY ? Or would it be the most daring blasphemy to affect to believe that they are so given ?

Bad as all this is, shameful as it is, the blackest story still remains to come, namely, the invention and application of what is called QUEEN ANNE'S BOUNTY, of which the people of ENGLAND have heard *talk* long enough ; and it is now time that they understand something about it. They will find that it was no *Bounty* of Queen ANNE, or of anybody else ; but a parcel of *public revenue* and of *taxes*, taken from the people by the aristocracy and given to themselves. To prove this we must go a little back, and begin at the bottom of the curious thing which we have now before us.

Until HENRY the Eighth quarrelled with the Pope and cast him off, the Church paid its tenths and first-fruits to the Pope ; or at least, he had the disposal of them for what was termed the good of the Church. And now let us see what these tenths and first-fruits are. They consist of a tenth part of the annual revenues of every benefice, from the bishoprics down to the smallest parochial livings. These are called the tenths. The first-fruits consist of the first year's clear revenue of every benefice, from the bishop down-

wards. When Henry the Eighth and his Parliament took these from the Pope, the King having made himself head of the Church, took them to himself; had the several benefices valued; had books made, called THE KING'S BOOKS, in which the value was recorded; and he made the clergy pay their tenths and first-fruits accordingly, all which the Parliament provided for by an Act, 26th HENRY the Eighth, chapter 3. When MARY came to the throne, she gave back the tenths and first-fruits to the Pope. ELIZABETH (1st year, chapter 4) took them back to herself; but discharged or acquitted such benefices as had not a revenue of more than ten pounds a year. Money had become somewhat diminished in value at this time, and therefore it appeared just to make this change. In the reign of Queen ANNE, money had greatly lowered in value; and she (5 ANNE, chapter 24) discharged from the payment of the tenths and first-fruits all benefices the then revenues of which were under fifty pounds a year. We shall, by-and-by, see the monstrous profligacy of this work of discharging. But we must now return to Queen ANNE'S Bounty. She, like her Protestant predecessors, received the tenths and first-fruits, which were not her *private property*; but made a part of *her revenue*, wherewith to maintain her state, her household, her officers of state, her ambassadors, and the like; but the aristocracy fell upon a scheme of taking these tenths and first-fruits to themselves. By the Act 2 and 3 of ANNE, chapter 11, they took them away from her, under pretence of wanting money to augment the smaller livings; and they established a Board of first-fruits, consisting of trustees appointed by the Crown, who where to receive the tenths and first-fruits, and apply them to the purposes described by the Act; which was, the augmentation of small livings; and this they called the Bounty of Queen ANNE, though taxes were imposed on the people to be given to her *in lieu* of her

tenths and first-fruits ! I have spoken before of the act of her reign which discharged the small livings from paying the tenths and first-fruits, and shall have to speak of it again presently.

Thus you see that it was a portion of the revenues of the State which was thus taken from the State and given to the clergy, and as we shall presently see to the aristocracy. But we see only a part of this thing yet. Exemptions from land-tax and stamp taxes exist with regard to these small livings ; but besides these, numerous grants have been made out of the taxes ; out of the consolidated fund ; out of the fruit of the industry of every man in the Kingdom, Churchman, Dissenter, or Catholic. At the particulars and at the gross amount of all these grants, during the hundred and twenty years that the Queen ANNE's Bounty Corporation, or Board of Commissioners, has existed, I have no means of coming : but I know that during the regency and reign of our late most big and "beneficent" sovereign, *one million five hundred thousand pounds were voted out of the consolidated fund to go to augment the Queen ANNE's Bounty*, the particulars of which, year by year, will be seen in my history of that "beneficent" reign and regency. So that you will please to observe, it is all a mass of taxes altogether, taken from the Dissenters and Catholics, Scotch Church and all, as well as Churchmen, to be given for the relief of the poor clergy of the Church of England, as it is described in the distribution of Parliamentary grants ! Oh ! how this nation has been duped ! Oh ! what a score this Church has now to settle with it !

Well, but it was to "augment the small livings," was it not ? It was to make the lot of the poor parsons a little better, was it not ? Stop a bit, I will tell you all about that, and will, in the next paragraph but two, make you grind your teeth at the bare sight of anything so black ; but before I do that we must have a word about these "KING'S BOOKS," according to

which the Act of HENRY the Eighth above-mentioned (26th of his reign, chapter 3) the tenths and first-fruits were to be paid. That Act provided that the value of the benefices should be inserted in these books; and that the tenths and first-fruits should be paid accordingly. Now money was twenty times the value then that it is at this time; but it has been exceedingly convenient to the aristocracy and their Church that the *nominal sum* should still remain the same. So that a living that now yields five hundred a year was then rated, probably, at five-and-twenty pounds a year; and according to that rate the parson now pays, if he pays at all; so that he gives to the state two pounds ten shillings a year, instead of giving fifty pounds a year! I have before me an instance of this within my own knowledge. BOTLEY, the parish in which I lived, in HAMPSHIRE, is rated in the King's books as yielding a revenue to the parson of £5 10s. 2½d. a year. I know that the living was worth to the parson between five and six hundred pounds a year; so that the parson instead of paying fifty pounds a year or upwards, as his tenths; instead of paying upwards of five hundred pounds as his first-fruits, paid as first-fruits £5 10s. 2½d., and pays as tenths 11s. 0¼d.! Now the present man has had the living thirty-two years, and he has kept from the State, according to the law of HENRY the Eighth (without which these tenths and first-fruits have no existence in law), the sum of two thousand and sixty-one pounds, not reckoning interest. Yet it is not the parson who gain here: it is the ARISTOCRACY again! The *advowson* belongs to the Duke of PORTLAND; and it is worth so much more now than it would be if it rendered first-fruits and tenths according to the Act of HENRY VIII.! Good again: thus, it is all for *this aristocracy*.

But great numbers of the livings are discharged, on account of their smallness. Discharged, first by

the 1st of ELIZABETH, chapter 4; and second, by the 5th of ANNE, chapter 24. Now do look at the monstrousness of this. ELIZABETH discharged them if the revenue were not above ten pounds a year; and ANNE discharged them if they were under fifty pounds a year. That is to say, of their *real value* at those two times. But in laying this real value before the people, the value of the endowments only was given; only the real value of that which was given to the poor parson; and thus stands the thing now to this day; and the parish of BENTLEY, before-mentioned, the real revenue of which is from eight hundred to a thousand pounds a year, and the parish of ALDERSHOT, before mentioned, the revenue of which is between seven and eight hundred pounds a year, stand discharged from the payment of first-fruits and tithes, on the ground that each is worth less than fifty pounds a year, while their great revenues are received by Lords WALSINGHAM and GUILDFORD, who here rank amongst the “poor clergy of the Established Church!”

This would be a most scandalous piece of injustice to the nation; a most shameful evasion of the intention of the law, even if the Act of HENRY the Eighth had made no provision for the change in the value of money. But the Act does make such provision. It provides, that the Chancellor of ENGLAND, *for the time being*, shall issue commissions, in order to have livings taxed, and the rates levied to the use of the King, his heirs and successors for ever; so that all the benefices might pay, at all times, “according to their true and just, whole and entire, yearly values!” If the present Lord Chancellor were to issue, as he is fully authorized to do, without any new law, a commission of this sort, instead of carrying on discussions with Bishop BLOMFIELD, about “*Church Reform*,” we might expect something like real reform in this Church. This is the law as completely now as

it was in the 26th year of HENRY the Eighth ; and Bishop BLOMFIELD (clever fellow) is only thinking how he can make “provision for the *cure of souls*,” while his relation is a prebendary of CHESTER, and is the rector of two thundering great parishes in CHESHIRE ; and while there are 332 men who have 1,496 parishes amongst them !

But, the reader will say, you told us just now, that you would tell us all about the story of the Queen ANNE’s Bounty being applied to the mending of the lot of the poorer parsons ; and so I will tell you, and now directly. I have told you, that the living of ALDERSHOT yields a revenue of about seven hundred pounds a year. Well, now, that living has been augmented by Queen ANNE’s bounty, by the amount of fifty pounds a year ; that is to say, that the people pay, in taxes, fifty pounds a year to the poor parson, while Lord GUILDFORD takes away the whole of the revenue from the tithes, all but fifteen pounds ! I have told you that the living of Bentley yields from eight hundred to a thousand pounds a year ; and that the parson receives twenty-eight pounds a year out of that revenue, while Lord WALSINGHAM takes the rest. That living also has been augmented by Queen ANNE’s Bounty ; that is to say, out of the taxes, paid by Dissenters and Catholics, as well as by Churchmen. Every labouring man in the kingdom is taxed to help to pay this poor parson, while Lord WALSINGHAM takes away the revenues of the parish, and to Lord WALSINGHAM we give the taxes, to be sure, and not to the poor parson, whose living ought to be worth five hundred and sixty pounds a year. To crown the whole, great numbers of the rich pluralists are the holders of small livings that have been augmented by Queen ANNE’s Bounty, that is to say, they, under the garb of “*poor clergy*,” put into their pockets taxes, paid by a people whom they now propose to make live upon a “coarser sort of food !”

Now then, is it possible to reform this Church ? The

very first step would be to make it pay tenths and first-fruits, according to the true meaning of the law; and to make every living incumbent pay up the arrears, according to that law: the next step to compel the Church to pay back to the people the amount of all the sums that have been given to "the poor clergy out of the taxes :" the next step, to compel those who pay the miserable endowments out of the revenues of the parishes, to pay those endowments according to the altered value of money: the next step, to repeal the monstrous Act of 43rd of GEORGE III., and to compel residence unremitted, or forfeiture to the amount prescribed by the Act of HENRY VIII., and an addition in point of sum, according to the altered value of money. This would be *real reform*; with anything short of this no man of sense and of spirit would be satisfied; this would abolish the monstrous pluralities; would place a resident minister constantly in every parish; would make the clergy Christian-like teachers; would put an end to their scandalous luxury, and to their unbearable insolence.

The question is, can Sir ROBERT PEEL effect a reform like this? If he cannot, he will only labour in vain. At every step, he will be met with the statements which I have made in this book. He will perceive that there can be no contradiction given to me with truth. He will look at the monstrous mass of abuses, and of injustice towards the nation, that he will find stated in this little volume. He will perceive the utter impossibility of removing this mass of abuse and injustice, by any means, other than those that will put an end to this hierarchy for ever; he will see that that must be a great revolution in ENGLAND; but after he has turned it round and round, and looked at it on every side, he will see that that revolution is absolutely necessary to prevent a greater revolution. It will be, and I scorn to disguise my belief in the fact, a pulling down of the whole of the aristocracy; a lowering of

them by many a degree ; but he will have too much virtue, I should hope, not to prefer that to a destruction, a total destruction of THAT, which it is his bounden duty to uphold and defend at all hazards, whether of reputation or of life.

LETTER VI.

WHAT IS THAT COMPOUND THING CALLED CHURCH AND STATE ? AND WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECTS OF A SEPARATION OF THEM, ONE FROM THE OTHER ?

Parsons,

I shall, in the latter part of this letter, state what would be the effects of a separation of Church from State. As to the former question, we now know pretty well what a *Church* is, and what this Church in particular is ; and now let us see what a *State* is. A State is not a king and a ministry ; a State is a *Commonwealth* ; a people formed into a community, and freely forming a government, by which they agree to be ruled. That is a *State*, in the large sense of the word. In a somewhat narrower sense, it means *the government of such a community*, or commonwealth ; and everything which belongs to, or is upheld by, the whole government, legislative as well as executive, may be said to be *connected with the State*. In this manner the Church is connected with the State, and it calls itself, and the king, at his coronation, swears that it is a church established *by law* ; that is to say, by the law of man. The head of the government is also the head of the Church. The Church, as established by Christ and his Apostles, had no such head ; it knew

nothing of any government protection ; it appealed not to the laws of man. It asked for no laws, and it had no laws, to compel people to give their money or their goods for its support. It inculcated the duty of Christians giving their money or their goods, if they could afford it, to defray the expenses of the altar, and to feed and clothe those who served at the altar ; but it resorted to no force ; to no penalties, much less to imprisonment and death, to compel men to conform, and to give their money or their goods. The Church, as established by Christ and his Apostles, was, in this respect, what the Churches of the Dissenters are now. It depended, for its support, on the voluntary offerings, oblations, and contributions of the people. Therefore it is, that the Dissenters represent the Established Church as *unchristian* in its nature ; and, feeling that it loads them with heavy burdens, they justly and reasonably call for a separation of the Church from the State.

Now, let us hear the objections to the granting of this prayer of the Dissenters ; for it would be hard, indeed, if those who possess from six to eight millions a year of property belonging to the commonwealth ; hard, indeed, if they could find out no objection to the taking of that immense sum away from them.

Their first objection is, that such a change would be contrary to all the settled notions of mankind, according to which, it is the bounden duty of every government to provide for the religious instruction of the people. I have before answered this objection completely ; but if it be the duty of a government to provide for the religious instruction of the people, *does* it provide for it by the means of this Church, when we find, that, out of 16,000 parishes and townships there were resident only 5,397 incumbents ; and when we find 1,496 parishes in the hands of 332 incumbents ; when we further find, that there are in England and Wales 254 parishes without any churches ; 1,729 parishes,

which have no parsonage-houses ; and 1,422 parishes, which, in spite of the law, the parsons themselves represent as unfit to live in ; and, be it observed, too, that this refers to the *benefices*, and not to the parishes ; for then there are about five thousand more parishes and townships that have no parsonage-house, notwithstanding the provisions of the law, to compel the upholding of the parsonages ? Does the Church, then, exhibit to us the means of religious instruction for the people ? In a very large part of ENGLAND and WALES the teaching of religion would be utterly unknown to the people, were it not for the Dissenters of various descriptions. Many reports from the missionaries of the Dissenters have stated that they have found whole parishes totally destitute of all knowledge of religion. And why are we not to believe the fact, when we see 1,496 parishes with their revenues in the hands of 332 incumbents ?

But it is said, that these swallowers, these *noble*, *honourable*, and *gentle* incumbents, employ CURATES in their parishes ; that is to say, that they *hire men to do their duty*. In the first place, they do not hire one man for every parish ; and nothing is more common, in some parts of England, than one curate serving three parishes ; and in some cases four ; nothing so common as two. But, how stands this matter ? The curate is paid so poorly, that it is utterly impossible that he should perform the duties of a teacher of religion in the manner that he ought to do. He is a poor man, with hardly the means of living better than a mechanic, or a labourer. His poverty is known, and seen ; and, as he sets up for a *gentleman*, he excites no compassion in his beholders ; but is sure to excite their contempt ; and, this being the case, is it likely, that he should do much in the way of giving *religious instruction* ? Was it ever yet known in the world, that men sucked in instruction from those whom they despised ? However, it is certain that the incumbent

gives the curate but a small part of the revenue of the parish, and that he puts the rest into his own pocket; and here is the unpleasant dilemma for the parsons. Doubtless, the Earl of GUILDFORD has curates at OLD ALRESFORD, NEW ALRESFORD, MEDSTED, St. MARY SOUTHAMPTON, and SOUTH STONEHAM, and also in the parish of St. FAITH: doubtless he has curates; for he hardly does the duty himself, while he is living at WALDERSHARE in KENT, or sitting in the House of Lords. Doubtless he may have three curates, one at the ALRESFORDS and MEDSTED, one at St. FAITH and St. CROSS, and one at SOUTHAMPTON; and doubtless, he gives them stipends not under eighty pounds a year (in cases like these), according to the Act 53rd GEORGE III. chapter 149, which Act was made *to compel the rich incumbents to pay their hirelings at a certain rate!* But, here is the dilemma: here is the nasty dilemma for Sir ROBERT PEEL to touch in his Church-reform; either these miserable stipends are sufficient; are adequate to the payment of men to have the care of souls; or, they are not sufficient for that purpose. If they be not sufficient, then here is the State neglecting to provide for the religious instruction of the people; and if they be sufficient, *why give Lord GUILDFORD anything more* for these parishes, than the amount of the stipend paid to the hireling? Upon one or other of the horns of this dilemma Sir ROBERT PEEL must be hooked; and let him get off as he can; that is to say, he must be hooked, unless he be prepared, as I hope he may, to enact a separation of the Church from the State.

Another objection is, that, if the *voluntary principle* were adopted, religion would suffer by the *dependent state* of the Ministers, who would then be the mere hirelings of their flocks. What are these miserable curates then? They do not receive, on an average, one-half of what the average of Dissenting Ministers receive. And, as to dependence; the Dissenting

Ministers are dependent on the caprice of nobody; not even of their congregation; while the miserable curate is in the most abject state of dependence; and that, too, on the will, on the caprice, it may be, of *one single man*; for the incumbent has the power of discharging the curate whenever he pleases; in spite of all the pretences of the Act 53rd GEO. III., chap. 149, to give protection to these poor creatures. Besides which, the curate, if he do or say anything to displease the bishop of the diocese, he can prevent him from being employed in any other diocese; for no other bishop will suffer him to be employed, unless he brings *testimonials* from his last bishop; and these testimonials may be refused, *without cause assigned*; so that the poor creature's mouth is actually locked up; he is doomed to certain ruin or to absolute submission to the will of his master-parson. There is no footman so completely dependent as one of these miserable men; and these are the men which this Established Church gives us for our *religious instructors*: these are the men, with whom the State furnishes us to keep us all in the fold, and to protect us against adopting strange and erroneous doctrines!

Another objection is, that if there were not men *set apart* by the State to teach religion, and supplied with incomes by the State for that purpose, the teaching of religion would fall into *low hands*; that the ministers of CHRIST would become a mere mundane race of men, hankering after "*the world and the flesh*"; and, Sir WILLIAM SCOTT, in his impudent speech, when he, as member for the University of OXFORD, moved the passing of the before-mentioned Act of GEORGE the Third, 43rd year of his reign, chapter 84, which, as we observed before, *let the parsons loose*, insisted that it was proper that the clergy should *go to places of fashionable resort*, and *of pleasure*, with their families, seeing that, "*by the Reformation, they had been invited to marry*." I must stop here to observe, that

Sir JAMES GRAHAM, in his speech on Lord JOHN RUSSELL's motion regarding the Irish Tithes, took occasion to utter an invective against the *celibacy* of the Roman Catholic clergy, and observed, that “*our Church* denominated *unmarried priests* *unholy priests*.” Now, then, let us see how the “*Reformation*” invited them to marry: now let us see whether our Church holds *unmarried priests* to be *unholy priests*. After the *Reformation* had been made; after the new Church and the Prayer-Book had been enacted, an Act (2nd and 3rd EDWARD the Sixth, chapter 21) was passed to “*take away all positive laws made against the marriage of priests;*” and upon what grounds was this Act passed, and what did it say in its preamble? Why, this is what it said. “Although it were not only “better for the estimation of priests, and other ministers “in the Church of GOD, to live chaste, sole, and separate “from the company of women, and the bond of marriage, “but also thereby they might the better intend to the “administration of the Gospel, and be less intricated and “troubled with the charge of household, being free and “unburdened with care and cost of finding wife and “children, and that it were most to be wished, that they “would willingly and of themselves, endeavour them- “selves to a perpetual chastity and abstinence from the “use of women: yet, forasmuch as the contrary had “rather been seen, &c., &c.;” and then the Act proceeds to *exempt them from pains and penalties*, if they do marry! And this is what Sir WILLIAM SCOTT called “*inviting them to marry;*” and this is what the learned doctor in divinity, Sir JAMES GRAHAM, calls the principle of our Church, that “*an unmarried priest is an unholy priest.*”

I have before noticed the arrogance and insolence of the clergy, at the time of the passing of the Act of 43rd GEORGE III. c. 84, which put an end to the informations against them, and which let them loose to ramble about as they liked, and to farm and to traffic.

I have before observed on the advantage which they took of the violences committed in France. And SCOTT, (now STOWELL), when he moved for this Bill, uttered these memorable words : “ Whilst we have seen, in *other countries*, CHRISTIANITY SUFFERING “ in the persons of the oppressed clergy, it imposes a “ *peculiar obligation upon us*, to treat our own *with kindness and respect*, and to beware of *degrading religion* by an apparent degradation of its ministers ! ” What an impudent speech ! They had deserted their flocks : they had abandoned their parishes : they had broken their solemn vows and their solemn oaths ; they had abandoned the people committed to their charge, after having solemnly declared that they believed themselves to have been *inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost* to take upon them the office, “ to serve God for “ the promoting of his glory, and the edifying of his “ people ; ” they had set the law of the land at defiance in the most daring manner ; and it was called “ *degrading religion* ” to attempt to bring them back to their duty ! But, such was the hoodwinked, frightened, and cowed-down state of the nation at that time, that this impudent speech passed without censure from anybody ! Excellent, too, that Christianity had suffered in France in the persons of the clergy of that country ; excellent and most impudent to tell us that the *Roman Catholic* religion being put down caused *Christianity to suffer*, though the University, of which this SCOTT was the representative, and for whom he was talking, had, for three hundred years taught us that that religion was *idolatrous and damnable* !

To return to the objection, that the teaching of religion would fall into low hands ; which objection we will take in the words of SCOTT ; that, if there was an equalization of the Church-incomes, “ we should “ run the risk of having a body of clergy *resembling only the lower orders of society in their conversation*, “ in their manners, and their habits ; and it were well

"if they were not affected by a *popular fondness* for
"some of the species of a *gross* and *factious* religion." But how could they well be lower than these miserable curates, if small incomes would make them low? And these miserable curates we have in the 16,000 parishes, where there are any ministers at all, excepting 5,379 parishes. How then could the *voluntary principle* make them lower? And, appealing to the fact, are the Dissenting ministers lower now? Every one who knows anything of the matter will say that they are not, and that, as to respect and reverence, every one knows that all the settled Dissenting ministers have fifty times as much of these as falls to the lot of the parsons.

The Dissenting ministers are sometimes traders at the same time; they are farmers and dealers. And what are the parsons? Why, they were indeed most positively forbidden, by law, to be farmers and dealers; they were informed against for being such; there was the just law to punish them for it: they set that law at defiance: the boronghmonger parliament repealed the law; quashed the informations against them; passed another law to *allow them to farm and to deal*. As cattle-jobbers; as dealers in cattle, sheep, hogs, and horses; as buyers and sellers of these, they are amongst the most eminent and the most busy in the country. Scarcely was that Act passed (43 GEORGE III., chap. 84), to protect them against informations, and to allow them to farm and to job, when the BOTLEY Parson took, on lease, a considerable farm in his parish, called BRACKSALLS; though the glebe that surrounded his parsonage-house consisted of five fields and a meadow of very good land; and though his living was worth from five to six hundred pounds a year.

But, why need we waste our time in any statement to show, that this would necessarily be the case, when the public papers informed us of a bishop standing as a *partner*, behind a banker's counter at CAMBRIDGE.

at the time of the panic, to pay the pressing customers and to give his countenance in favour of the solvency of the house? In the LONDON Gazette of Friday, 30th January, 1835, was the following, under the head of *bankrupts*: “The Reverend Thomas Fisher, King-ston-upon-Hull, the Reverend John Fisher, Higham upon-the-hill, Leicestershire; and Mary Simmonds, of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire, BANKERS.” These men have each of them a rectory in the Church; and they both most solemnly vowed at the altar, that they would constantly attend to the people committed to their charge; that they would *lay aside the study of the world and the flesh*; and that they verily believed themselves to be inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost; whereupon they solemnly ratified the same, by *partaking of the Holy Communion!* If a banker is not a trafficker, I should like to know what is. His business is that of money-changing, indeed. Very proper business for *other men* to carry on, provided they carry it on within the limits prescribed by the law; but how are the people to have respect for a man who has made the vows that these men made, relative to the *world and the flesh*; and who are seen afterwards carrying on a business, the sole object of which is that of making money? These two men have large livings in the Church; so that they have not been tempted by their poverty to break their vows.

One more instance of this sort will be quite enough. I find in the LONDON Gazette of the 24th of March, 1835, a list of *bankrupts*, with regard to whose estates dividends are to be made on the 16th of April; and amongst these bankrupts is the following: “The Reverend S. W. Perkins, Stockton, Warwickshire, clerk, BROKER; at twelve, at the George Inn, Warwick.” Now, this holy *broker* is the rector of STOCKTON, in the diocese of LICHFIELD and COVENTRY, and his rectory is a large living; and need there be more said on this part of the subject; can any

Dissenting minister be lower than being a *broker* in the very town where his congregation resides ; and within a stone's throw of the church, to enter which, as a minister, he has professed that he believed he was inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost ; in that very parish where he had promised to lay aside the study of the world and of the flesh, and to live as a wholesome example and spectacle to the flock of CHRIST ? And this man a *broker*; a buyer and seller purely for gain's sake ; for no other purpose whatsoever but to get money ! And yet SCOTT had the audacity to say that the Act (43rd GEORGE III., chap. 84) was necessary to prevent men in the Church from resembling the lower orders of society !

However, there is something a great deal worse than this ; namely, the receiving of *military* and *naval* pay ; or rather half-pay, and being in the church at the same time. At the end of the war, great numbers of the the aristocracy, their relations and dependants, went into the Church. Every man of them professed at the altar, and took the communion as a ratification of his profession, that he verily believed that he was inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him this new calling, though so different from his last ! Every one thus solemnly pledged himself to lay aside the study of the world and the flesh. In spite of this, every one of them *took the half-pay, as being still naval and military officers !* And now mark the conduct of them, and of the government ; the half-pay is a RETAINING FEE FOR FUTURE SERVICES. I beg you to mark this ; and this half-pay is very frequently taken away merely by the king saying to the officer that he has no longer any need of his services. If called upon to serve, and they refuse to come out to serve, their half-pay is taken away. It is the same with non-commissioned officers and private soldiers ; and I have just sent two memorials to the paymaster-general in behalf of two private soldiers, who had their

pensions taken away a good while ago. It is therefore, you will observe, *not a reward for past services*, but a *retaining fee for future services*. What a flagitious act, then, to give these soldier-parsons half-pay, after they had got livings in the Church ! Mr. HUME complained of this, and I made a weekly exposition of the shameful transaction for a whole year, or thereabouts. At last the half-pay to these men was *stopped*; but now, do mark; do mark, if you have a mind to know this government and this Church. A *certain time was to be given before the half-pay was to be stopped*; and (hear it, if you have ears !) before the day of stopping arrived, notice was given that any officer *might SELL his half-pay out and out* ! and yet Sir JAMES GRAHAM tells us that the tithes do not belong to the people, but that *they belong to God*; and he would tell us, I dare say, that these half-pay people were *appointed by God to receive them for him* ! One of these military heroes, who felt himself inwardly moved as aforesaid, was the Honourable Mr. NEVILLE, now Lord Viscount NEVILLE, who was receiving, for about twelve years, tithes as a parson, and half-pay as a captain of horse; and he is now vicar of BYRLING, rector of HOLVESTON, rector of BURGH APTON, and rector of OTLEY. And is he to have all these livings still ? and is the Lord Viscount to keep the military half-pay that he got during the twelve years ? If he be, I care not if England be sunk to the bottom of the sea.

What is any one to apprehend as the consequence of putting an end to a Church like this ? Can anything arise more barefaced ? Can anything arise more offensive to the people ? The LAW ; these fellows always talk to us about the law ; the law requires that the parsonage-houses, and the buildings belonging to them, shall be kept in good and sufficient repair ; and that, if any incumbent suffer the parsonage-house to fall out of repair, he, if he quit that living for another, shall

pay for dilapidations ; that is to say, put the house in repair ; and that if he die, his property shall be liable for the same ; and the law expressly provides that the money which he or his heirs pay for dilapidations, shall be expended upon the house. To what a scandalous extent this law has been set at defiance, appears from a return which the bishops had the face to make to the king in council, in 1818, from which return it appears, that even out of the 10,421 benefices (almost every benefice containing more than one parish), there were 1729 benefices *without any parsonage-house at all*, and 1,422 parishes in which the parsonage-houses were unfit to live in ! And the bishops, knowing the law as they must, had the face to make this report to the king in council ! The *reasons* which the several parsons give for the unfitness of the parsonage-houses, are of themselves quite sufficient to authorize the Parliament to abate this Church by law. So much insolence, so much brazen effrontery, never was before shown by mortal men. One says, that "the parsonage-house is *too small* ;" another, "not large enough for the accommodation of a *gentleman's family* ;" another says, "*incommodious* ;" another says, "*inconvenient* ;" and they had the impudence to say this when they had obtained a letting loose from the law which bound them to reside in their parsonage-houses. The greater part of them, however, are represented as being in a ruinous state and irreparable ; and the bishops tell us, that nearly two thousand of them have been suffered to fall down and disappear. The parsons have pocketed the tithes and other revenues of the parishes, and have suffered this great mass of national property to be annihilated ; and if the Waterloo-delusion could have continued, if the great Captain's picture could have continued on the sign-posts, it would not have been at all wonderful if a second SCOTT had come to propose to the Parliament a grant of money to *rebuild these houses*. However, let us

congratulate ourselves on the fact that these audacious men will never make another return like this: the effects of their Waterloo-war have overtaken them at last. Like a stag at bay, they are got up into a corner, looking from side to side but seeing no means of escape.

Amongst the evils of this Church is that evil described by Lord BACON, who says, "A numerous married clergy, giving life to great numbers of idlers, or persons never to work, is very dangerous to a State, by creating mouths without creating a suitable portion of labour at the same time." Now go to the Navy-list, go to the Army-list, go to the Taxing-offices, go to the Government-offices, go to the military and naval Academies, go to the Pension-list, go to the great schools and colleges, go to any of these swarms of idle devourers, and you will find that not much less than a full third part of the whole have either sprung from parsons, or have married parsons' daughters; and whence the parsons themselves have come, let it be reserved for me to tell when I am in a place differing a good deal from a farm-house.

Well, then, what short of a total repeal of all the laws which create the revenue and powers of this mass of monstrous abuse can possibly be of any avail? What, short of adopting the voluntary principle; what, short of a separating of the Church from the State, can give satisfaction to the people, and peace to the country? RELIGION! How is religion to suffer; how is the religion of the Bible, how is the religion of JESUS CHRIST and his Apostles to suffer, by putting down these monstrous abuses, which exist by a misapplication of its sacred name? Can notoriously broken vows and broken oaths; can an open abandonment of the flock, after a vow made to watch constantly over it, and that, too, ratified by receiving the sacrament; can 1,496 parishes in the hands of 332 men; can these tend to the promotion of morality

and religion ; and can it be the duty of any government to give even the slightest countenance to a thing like this ? If there were danger of strange doctrines rising up, could a thing like this prevent it ? If there were danger of heats and animosities, arising from differences of opinion about religion, could a thing like this produce reconciliation and harmony amongst the parties ? If the people were prone to infidelity ; if conceited Deism, or gloomy and half-mad Atheism, were likely to get a hold upon this at all times religious people, would a thing like this have a tendency to make it loosen its hold ? Would the Deist, or the Atheist, be reduced to silence, by having pointed out to him the bankrupt bankers, the bankrupt broker, the retaining-fee-receiving soldier ; all of them having at their ordination made a vow to lay aside the world and the flesh ? Would the Deist or Atheist be silenced by seeing 332 men with 1,496 parishes in their hands ; by seeing the tithes paid where there was no Church, by seeing the parsonage-houses tumble down into ruins ; and lastly, by seeing bishops sitting in a commission to discover the means of providing for the cure of souls, while each of those bishops has given a plurality of livings to relations of his own !

On the other hand, look at the Dissenters ; see with what strictness and what decorum they perform their duties to their flocks. Look at the effect upon those flocks ; look at the personal attention of the ministers to individuals standing in need of their peculiar care. Look at their exertions ; look at their labours ; look at their unexceptionable moral habits and manners ; look at the respect that is paid to them ; look at the real affection for them ; turn then, and look at the clergy of the Established Church, and at the feeling of the people towards them ; and then say if you can, that RELIGION would not be benefitted ; that it would not be, in its effect, much greater than now, if the voluntary principle prevailed, and if this Church

were separated from the State. But there is the great *American nation*, where it is separated from the State, and where we are presented with successful experience to guide us.

Oh ! say they, you must not go to AMERICA ; and they told us in the House of Commons that we must go to FRANCE, PRUSSIA, AUSTRIA, and BELGIUM ! BELGIUM, where the king is our pensioner, who takes care to keep a house well aired at ESHER, in SURREY. But why not to AMERICA ? The people there sprang from Englishmen. The people that settled NEW HAMPSHIRE went from OLD HAMPSHIRE ; and they called the place of their landing PORTSMOUTH, and there they built a town, which goes by that name to this day ; and there is a NORFOLK, a SUFFOLK, a KENT, a SUSSEX, and all the counties and all the towns of ENGLAND and WALES. There are the laws of ENGLAND ; the manners of ENGLAND ; the language of ENGLAND ; the WINCHESTER bushel ; the statute acre : there is the learning and literature of ENGLAND. There are all our books ; and this book that I am writing now, will only appear six weeks later in NEW YORK than it will appear in LONDON. This, then, is the country to go to for a test of the effect of the voluntary principle. There the law knows nothing at all about religions, one sort or another ; and it never did know anything about religion, except in that part of the States called NEW ENGLAND. There was a law there, somewhat resembling the law of ENGLAND in the early period of the institution of tithes. This law compelled every man to yield tithes, but to yield them to *whatever priest he chose*. So, in NEW ENGLAND, every man might pay towards the support of what sect and what place of worship he liked ; but he was compelled by law to pay to *some one*. In 1816, however, all these laws were repealed in NEW ENGLAND ; and since that, in that country, the law has known nothing of religion, any more

than it has known of the conduct of the birds and bats. Yet in this whole world was there ever a country, in which such complete peace and harmony prevailed! Never is such a thing heard of, as a quarrel of one religious sect against another. In social intercourse; in the courts of law; in the choosing of officers, political or municipal; in legislative assemblies; in the senate; on the bench; in the army; in the navy; Churchmen, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Unitarian, Independent, all mixed together, without a suspicion in any man's mind, that his cause, in the case of any dispute, is safer in the hands of persons of his own sect, than in those of the persons of any other sect. Here, then, is *the precedent* upon which for us to stand: here is solid ground for us to move upon; and let no statesman in ENGLAND imagine that this example can be exhibited to our eyes *for many years longer*, without goading us on to imitation.

The surprising progress in wealth, power, arts, arms, science, and prosperity of the UNITED STATES, is *silently* producing an effect on all the nations of Europe; but particularly on ENGLAND. It is another ENGLAND, at only twenty days distance; and it is impossible, not only morally, but almost physically, impossible, that this ENGLAND should view the state of that other ENGLAND, for any length of time, without resolving to be its rival in freedom and in happiness, and particularly on the score of freedom as to religion. Our aristocracy (never deficient in low cunning and in spite), saw, at the close of the French war, the final effect of the example of the UNITED STATES upon ENGLAND. This was the real ground of that war which JACKSON ended at NEW ORLEANS, and which heroic and bullet-proof WATERLOO took care not to have a hand in; that war which added seventy millions to our debt, and which first told us the unwelcome secret that we had found out somebody

to beat us at last, and beat us they will in everything; unless we resolve to imitate them in cheapness of government, and in a religion unknown to the laws; and if there were no other motive for resorting to these, we shall be compelled to resort to them in self-defence.

Having now shown what this thing called “Church and State” is ; and having proved, I trust, most satisfactorily, that a separation of the one from the other is not the less necessary to the inculcation of true religion, than it is to the freedom, the peace, and the well-being of the Commonwealth, I should here lay down my pen ; but I must, in conclusion, just notice the curious principle which I hear many men, to my great surprise, accede to without difficulty ; namely, that though it is just and expedient to put an end to the monstrous abuses of which I have been speaking, “existing interests” are not to be touched ; that is to say, that all those who are wallowing in the fruits of the abuses, are therein to wallow to the end of their lives. So that, while “pluralities are to be put an end to” and a residence is to be insisted on, the young fellows (and there are scores upon scores of them) each of whom has four or five parishes now ; these scores and other scores, and hundreds, who are now non-residing, are to continue to possess their parishes, and to non-reside, to the end of their lives, leaving to the nation a pretty fair chance of seeing something like a reform effected in about three score years from this day ! Oh, no ; let us, in this respect, take a leaf out of the book of the Church itself ; let the law do by these parsons as it did by the Catholic priests ; that is to say, as to method, but not in degree. They were left to wander over the face of the earth, miserable mendicants, with the mere mockery of a pension : let us be merciful ; and make suitable provision for such as shall think proper to refuse to perform the duties in the churches on the

voluntary principle : and I have long thought that this would be the end ; and the conviction in my mind is now more firmly fixed than ever.

Parsons, thus I conclude : *I call upon you to answer this book.* That you will not attempt to do ; but the minds of my readers will be made up, and the just conclusion will be, that you are unable to answer.

THE ACT OF PARLIAMENT BY WHICH THE CHURCH WAS MADE.

2 AND 3 EDWARD THE SIXTH, CHAPTER 1.

An Act for the Uniformity of Service and Administration of the Sacraments throughout the Realm.

Whereas, of long time, there hath been had in this realm of *England*, and in *Wales*, divers forms of Common Prayer, commonly called the Service of the Church, that is to say, the use of *Sarum*, of *York*, of *Bangor* and of *Lincoln*; and besides the same now of late much more divers and sundry forms and fashions have been used in the cathedral and parish churches of *England* and *Wales*, as well concerning the Mattens or Morning Prayer and the Evensong, as also concerning the Holy Communion, commonly called the Mass, with divers and sundry rites and ceremonies concerning the same, and in the administration of other Sacraments of the Church: And as the doers and executors of the said rites and ceremonies, in other form than of late years they have been used, were pleased therewith: So other not using the same rites and ceremonies, were thereby greatly offended: And albeit the King's Majesty, with the advice of his most entirely beloved uncle, the Lord Protector, and other of his Highness's Council, hath heretofore divers times assayed to stay innovations or new rites concerning the premisses; yet the same hath not had such good success as his Highness required in that behalf; whereupon his Highness, by the most prudent advice aforesaid, being pleased to bear with the frailty and weakness of his subjects in that behalf, of his great clemency hath

not been only content to abstain from punishment of those that have offended in that behalf, for that his Highness taketh that they did it of a good zeal; but also to the intent a uniform quiet and godly order should be had concerning the premisses, hath appointed the Archbishop of *Canterbury*, and certain of the most learned and discreet bishops, and other learned men of this realm, to consider and ponder the premisses; and thereupon having as well eye and respect to the most sincere and pure Christian religion taught by the Scripture, as to the usages in the primitive Church, should draw and make one convenient and meet Order, Rite and Fashion of Common and open Prayer and Administration of the Sacra- ments, to be had and used in his Majesty's realm of *England* and in *Wales*; the which at this time, by the aid of the Holy Ghost, with one uniform agree- ment is of them concluded, set forth and delivered to his Highness, to his great comfort and quietness of mind, in a book entitled, "The Book of the Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacra- ments, and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, after the Use of the Church of England." Wherefore the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, considering as well the most godly travel of the King's Highness, of the Lord Protector, and of other His Highness's, Council, in gathering and collecting the said Archbishop, Bishops, and learned men together, as the godly Prayers, Orders, Rites, and Ceremonies in the said book mentioned, and the con- siderations of altering those things which he altered, and retaining those things which he retained in the said book, but also the honour of God and great quietness, which, by the grace of God, shall ensue upon the one and uniform Rite and Order in such Common Prayer and Rites and external Ceremonies to be used throughout England and in Wales, at Calice

and the Marches of the same, do give to his Highness most hearty and lowly thanks for the same. And humbly prayen that it may be ordained and enacted by his Majesty, with the assent of the Lords and Commons in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, that all and singular person and persons that have offended concerning the premisses, other than such person and persons as now be and remain in the Tower of London, or in the Fleet, may be pardoned thereof: and that all and singular ministers in any Cathedral or Parish Church, or other place within this realm of England, Wales, Calice, and the Marshes of the same, or other the King's dominions, shall, from and after the Feast of Pentecost next coming, be bounden to say and use the Mattens, Evensong, Celebration of the Lord's Supper, commonly called the Mass, and Administration of each of the Sacraments, and all their common and open Prayer, in such order and form as is mentioned in the same book, and none other or otherwise. And albeit that the same be so godly and good, that they give Occasion to every honest and conformable man most willingly to embrace them, yet, lest any obstinate person, who willingly would disturb so godly order and quiet in this realm should not go unpunished, that it may also be ordained and enacted, by the authority aforesaid, "That if any manner of Parson, Vicar, or other whatsoever Minister, that ought or should sing or say Common Prayer mentioned in the said book, or minister the Sacra- ments, shall, after the said Feast of Pentecost next coming, refuse to use the said Common Prayers, or to minister the Sacraments in such Cathedral or Parish Church, or other places as he should use or minister the same, in such order and form as they be men- tioned and set forth in the said book; or shall use, wilfully and obstinately standing in the same, any other Rite, Ceremony, Order, Form, or manner of

Mass, openly or privily, or Mattens, Evensong, Administration of the Sacraments, or other Open Prayer than is mentioned and set forth in the said book (Open Prayer in and throughout this Act, is meant that Prayer which is for other to come unto or hear, either in common Churches or private Chapels or oratories, commonly called the Service of the Church); or shall preach, declare, or speak any thing in the derogation or depraving of the said book, or any thing therein contained, or of any part thereof; and shall be thereof lawfully convicted according to the laws of this realm, by verdict of twelve men, or by his own confession, or by the notorious evidence of the fact, shall lose and forfeit to the King's Highness, his Heirs and Successors, for the first offence, the profit of such one of his spiritual benefices or promotions as it shall please the King's Highness to assign or appoint, coming and arising in one whole year next after his conviction; And also that the same person so convicted shall, for the same offence, suffer imprisonment by the space of six months, without bail or mainprise: And if any such person once convict of any such offence concerning the premisses shall after his first conviction, eftsoons offend and be thereof in form aforesaid lawfully convict, that then the same person shall for his second offence suffer imprisonment by the space of one whole year: and also shall therefore be deprived, ipso facto, of all his spiritual promotions; and that it shall be lawful to all patrons, donors, and grantees, of all and singular the same spiritual promotions, to present to the same any other able clerk, in like manner and form as though the party so offending were dead: And that if any such person or persons, after he shall be twice convicted in form aforesaid, shall offend against any of the premisses the third time, and shall be thereof in form aforesaid lawfully convicted, that then the person so offending and convicted the third time, shall suffer imprisonment during his life. And

if the person that shall offend and be convict in form aforesaid concerning any of the premisses, shall not be beneficed nor have any spiritual promotion, that then the same person so offending and convict shall, for the first offence, suffer imprisonment during six months, without bail or mainprise: And if any such person not having any spiritual promotion, after his first conviction, shall eftsoons offend in anything concerning the premisses, and shall in form aforesaid be thereof lawfully convicted, that then the same person shall, for his second offence, suffer imprisonment during his life.

And it is ordained and enacted by the authority aforesaid, that if any person or persons whatsoever, after the said Feast of *Pentecost* next coming, shall, in any interludes, plays, songs, rhymes, or by other open words, declare or speak any thing in the derogation, depraving or despising of the same book or of any thing therein contained, or any part thereof; or shall by open fact, deed, or by open threatenings, compel, or cause, or otherwise procure or maintain, any Parson, Vicar, or other Minister in any Cathedral or Parish Church, or in any Chapel or other place, to sing or say any common and open prayer, or to minister any Sacrament otherwise or in any other manner or form than is mentioned in the said book; or that, by any of the said means, shall unlawfully interrupt, or let any Parson, Vicar, or other Ministers, in any Cathedral or Parish Church, Chapel, or any other place, to sing or say common and open prayer, or to minister the Sacraments, or any of them, in any such manner and form as is mentioned in the said book: That then every person being thereof lawfully convicted in form aforesaid, shall forfeit to the King, our Sovereign Lord, his Heirs and Successors, for the first offence ten pounds. And if any person or persons, being once convicted of any such offence, eftsoons offend against any of the premisses, and shall in form aforesaid

be thereof lawfully convict, that then the same persons so offending and convict, shall for the second offence, forfeit to the King, our Sovereign Lord, his Heirs and Successors, twenty pounds: And if any person, after he in form aforesaid shall have been twice convict of any offence concerning any of the premisses, shall offend the third time, and be thereof in form abovesaid lawfully convict, that then every person so offending and convict shall for his third offence forfeit to our Sovereign Lord the King all his goods and chattels, and shall suffer imprisonment during his life. And if any person or persons, that for his first offence concerning the premisses shall be convict in form aforesaid, do not pay the sum to be paid by virtue of his conviction, in such manner and form as the same ought to be paid, within six weeks next after his conviction; that then every person so convict, and so not paying the same, shall, for the first offence, instead of the said ten pound, suffer imprisonment by the space of three months without bail or mainprise. And if any person or persons, that for his second offence concerning the premisses shall be convict in form aforesaid, do not pay the sum to be paid by virtue of his conviction, in such manner and form as the same ought to be paid within six weeks next after his said second conviction; that then every person so convicted, and not so paying the same, shall, for the same second offence, in the stead of the said twenty pounds, suffer imprisonment during six months, without bail or mainprise.

N.B.—*The rest of the Act consists of the technical matters as to the execution thereof.*

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